Ore no Imōto ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai Volume 1

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These are novel illustrations that were included in Volume 1

俺の妹がこんなに可愛いわけがない

俺の妹・高坂桐乃は、茶髪にピアスのいわゆるイマドキの女子中学生で、身内の俺が言うのもなんだが、かなりの美人ときたもんだ。けれど、コイツは兄の俺を平気で見下してくるし、俺もそんな態度が気にくわないので、ここ数年まともに口なんか交わしちゃいない。よく男友達からは羨ましがられるが、キレイな妹がいても、いいことなんて一つもないと声を大にして言いたいね（少なくとも俺にとっては）！

だが俺はある日、妹の秘密に関わる超特大の地雷を踏んでしまう。まさかあの妹から“人生相談”をされる羽目になるとは――!?

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俺の妹がこんなに可愛いわけがない
伏見つかさ
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伏見(ふしみ)つかさ

早いものでデビュー三周年を迎えました。そういえば三年前の夏に初めての本を出して以来、毎年八月に本を出しています。全著作の半分以上が八月発売……こう書くと、奇妙な縁を感じますね。夏に相応しい、活力に満ちたお話を書く作家でありたいものです。

【電撃文庫作品】

十三番目のアリス
十三番目のアリス②
十三番目のアリス③
十三番目のアリス④
俺の妹がこんなに可愛いわけがない

イラスト:かんざきひろ

イラストレーター兼アニメーター。1978年生まれ。本業の傍ら、海外でレコードをリリースするなど音楽活動もこなす何でも屋状態の変な緑色の生物。
HP http://nekomimi.tabgraphics.under.jp/

カバー／旭印刷

不思議がいっぱい

伏見つかさ
Illustration・かんざきひろ

Tsukasa Fushimi

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C O N T E N T S

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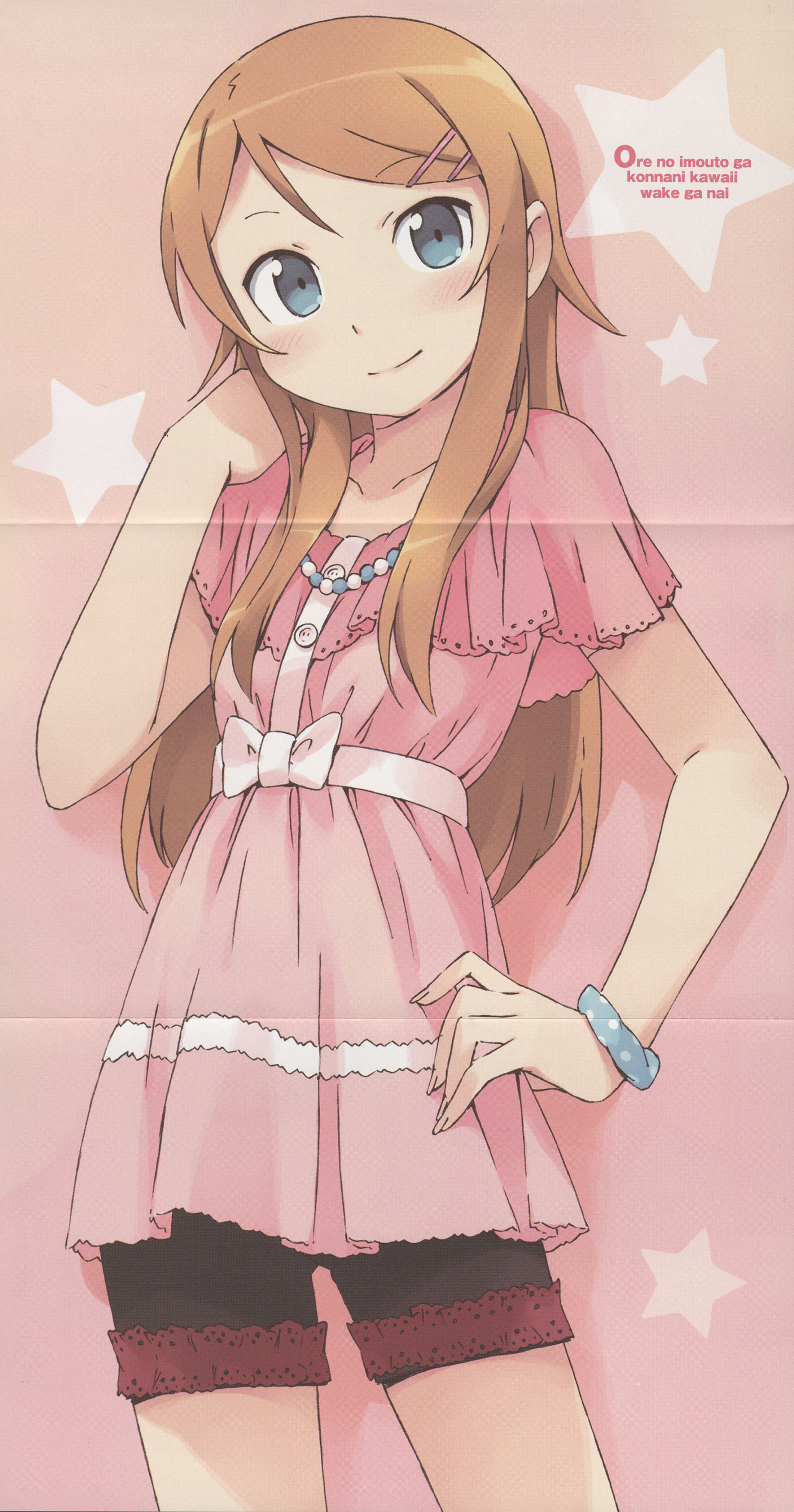
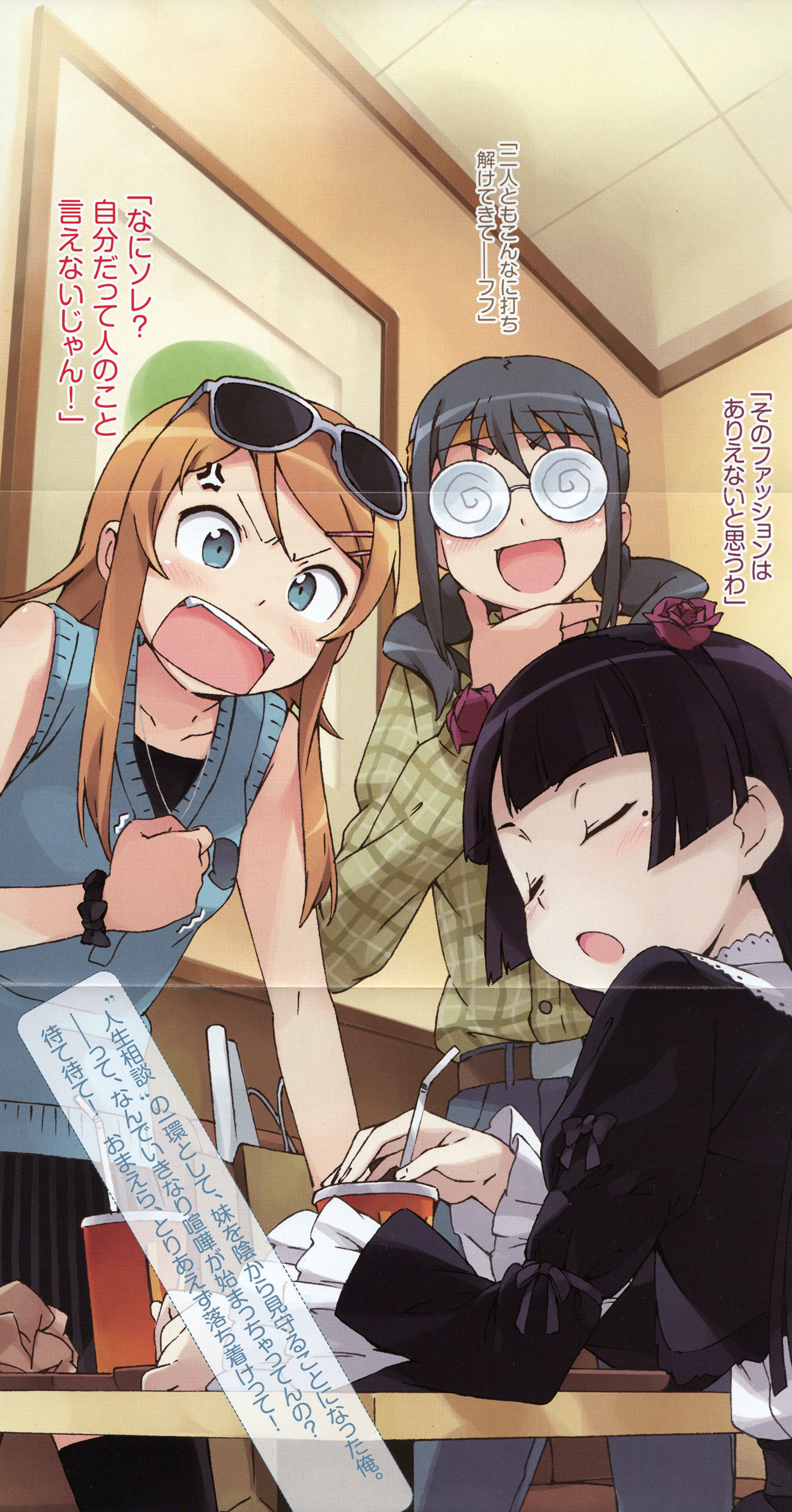

Ore no imouto ga
konnani kawaii
wake ga nai


「そのファッションは
ありえないと思うわ」
「二人ともこんなに打ち
解けてきて――フフ」
「なにソレ？
自分だって人のこと
言えないじゃん！」
“人生相談”の1環として、妹を陰から見守ることになった俺。
――って、なんでいきなり喧嘩が始まっちゃってんの？
おまえら、とりあえず落ち着けって！
待て待て！

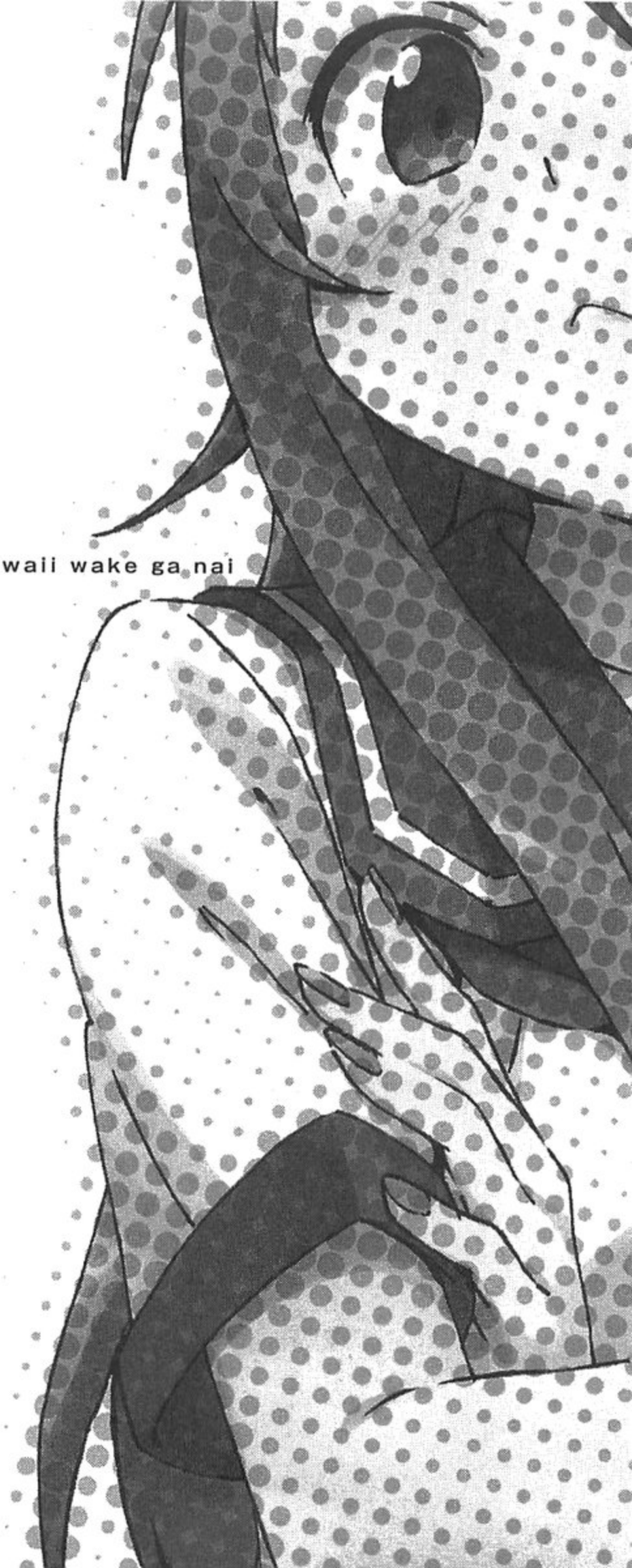
俺の妹がこんなに可愛いわけがない

伏見つかさ
Tsukasa Fushimi

Illustration かんざきひろ

ore no imouto ga konnani kawaii wake ga nai

第一章



Chapter 1

When I arrived home from school I found my sister in the living room, chatting on her phone. Her name is Kousaka Kirino, and she's a fourteen year old middle school student attending the local school. Her hair is dyed a light brown, her ears are pierced, and her long nails are elegantly manicured. She applies makeup carefully, though she would still be attractive without it. She carries an atmosphere too mature for a middle school student. She's tall, yet well-endowed in certain places, too.

If she was a good singer as well, you'd have a charismatic idol.

I'm not being generous because she's family. My sister is just one hell of a refined person.

However, I have no intention of proudly boasting that she's my sister. Sure, the guys will envy me. I might even understand why, but from personal experience, it's just not like that.

If you actually have a sister yourself, you should more or less understand my feelings.

A sister isn't anything great, at least to me.

For instance, imagine this: in your classroom, there are always many different groups of friends. Take the most gorgeous one as an example. The one with the jock, the smart and cool guy and the super cute girl.

Now, there's a girl who is one rank higher, even more refined, in that group.

The girl whom you might hesitate even to talk to. The girl living in another world that you might never have anything to do with. She's what you might call "the girl on another level." Most men would find her uncomfortable, even if she looks nice. That's how I feel, too.

Now, imagine a girl like that in your own family. Of course, the distance between you isn't special.

Now you understand how uneasy I feel. It's not that nice of a thing, is it?

"I'm back."

I greet her as a formality but she fails to respond, not showing even the slightest sign of recognition.

Kirino, in her school uniform, sinks deep into the sofa and crosses her mini skirt-covered legs. She's laughing at her mobile, looking pleased.

Her smile is surely cute, but it will never be directed towards me.

"Oh? You're kidding! What the heck? Haha! What an idiot."

"Yeah, yeah. I was an idiot for trying to talk to you."

I grumbled to myself, swinging the fridge door wide open. Grabbing a pack of barley tea, I pour it into a cup and gulp it down. Phew. I take a moment to rest before leaving.

"Yeah, all right. I'll get changed and head out."

It's already evening. Just where the heck is she going to play?

"Well, not that it matters to me." I mumble to myself and climb up the stairs.

My name is Kousaka Kyousuke. I'm a seventeen-year-old who goes to the local high school.

It's kind of strange to say this about myself, but I'm an average high school boy. I'm not in any clubs and I have no special hobbies, either. Of course, I do listen to popular music and read some manga and books, but not to the point that I would count it as a hobby.

After school, I usually fool around with my friends in town, read manga at home or watch TV.

Well, I do also study sometimes.

Aren't normal high school students like that? You might call it a safe but boring lifestyle, but I think being normal is quite important.

Being normal means acting in harmony with others and being realistic.

Acting safe means there is less danger.

Fortunately, my grades aren't too bad. If things continue the way they are now, I'll probably get into a decent university. As for what I'm going to do afterward. .. Well, I can think about that while I enjoy my four years of university life.

The ones that have to be in a flurry are those who won’ t get the job of their dreams through that path. Chasing dreams… It sounds nice, however, that means you won't be ‘normal’ anymore. There will be many dangers and it is, in no way, safe. At least, for me, it isn’t my thing.

Well I’ve long forgotten about my childhood dreams, but if I had to say something, an ordinary, inconspicuous , quiet, and trouble free life could be considered as one of them.

My home is a two story house. The family members include both my parents, my sister and myself, making a total of four.

A middle-class, well off, nothing out of the ordinary, family.

My sister’s and my room are on the second floor. After changing into plain clothes in my room, I rested for a while then went back down the stairs.

That’s because I wanted to use the toilet before I start to study. By the way, the front door comes right under the stairs and to the left of it is the door to the living room.

And so…

"Ah!"

Just after going down the stairs, I ran into my sister who was in her regular clothes. This area is actually a blind spot on both sides so collisions happen frequently.

Thud We collide with my left shoulder hitting Kirino 's breast. The force wasn't that strong, but it was enough for her bag to leave her hand and spill its contents onto the floor.

"Ah!"

"Oh sorry."

I make a frank apology and reach out to pick up the stuff scattered on the floor, like cosmetics, but…

Whap Kirino, sensing that, brushed my hand away with a slap.

"Wha-?"

I open my eyes wide and was surprised by her sharp look.

This is what comes out of my sister's mouth,

"Just leave it. Don't touch anything."

While saying that, she gathers the spilled contents of her bag on her own.

Oh how unpleasant she is. What is it? She doesn't want me touching her stuff?

How much do you hate your brother?

I looked down at my sister who continues on her task without expression.

"..."

An uneasy atmosphere fills the front hall.

My sister turns around, hurries into her pumps and murmurs, "...I'm going," as if she is fulfilling some sick duty, then closes the door with a slam.

Well as you can see, this is what our relationship is like .

I'm not terribly angry about this either, since I don't think of her as a sibling anymore.

If I just think of it as a random person from class doing the same thing, then it's easy to forgive her.

Go ahead and laugh at me for being a failure of a brother if you want. I don't care.

Heh, well it's not like my life will be disturbed because I can't communicate properly with my sister.

"…Jeez. Just when did things become like this?"

Even she had times when she wasn't like that, I think …

Oh well. It annoyed me a bit, but whatever. I shall return to my original task.

I finish peeing, washed my hands, and then dived into the living room sofa. I pick up a magazine left around and cross my legs, lying on my back.

Hey, wasn't I supposed to start studying?

Lying down and skimming through the pictures of a battle manga makes me feel emptier and emptier. My senses warn me that I shouldn't be doing things like this, but my astonishing laziness counters.

Ah forget it. I don't feel like studying.

This laziness must be a common disease amongst students.

I stand up shaking my head around like a dog who had just gotten a bucket of water poured over him, open the door and head into the hallway. I find something strange.

"Hmm…?"

It was in the corner of the entrance hall, on the backside of the shoe closet. I didn't notice it before, but in between the shoe closet and the wall, something thin and white, something like a case was peering out.

It must have been out of escapism that I reached my hand out for it. My brain was searching hard for any possible excuse not to study.

Even though picking this up would only buy me a few seconds worth of time.

But the outcome wasn't actually like that. In fact, because of this thing, studying became a secondary issue for a while.

The moment I pulled it out of the back of the shoe closet,

"What the heck is this?"

I made a wild scream. Why, you ask? It's because it was the kind of thing that did not belong in this house at all.

This, uhm well… What is this?

I pick up the case by my fingers and look at it from many different angles, but I couldn't seem to figure out its identity.

It's a DVD case, that's for sure. It's the kind of case you would usually find at the video rental shops.

Oh, it even says DVD on it. But the contents are what I don't get.

At that moment, I must have looked absolutely puzzled.

On the front side of the package was an illustration of a girl with oversized eyes, drawn up large.

A cute girl who is in her upper grades of grade school.

"Her eyes and hair are pink,"

I murmur calmly. I scrutinize it as if I'm a detective checking evidence for clues.

This might be its image color, since the entire package has large bits of pink and white.

Well, whatever. The bigger issue is,

"What the heck is wrong with this kid's outfit?"

I mean this little girl is dressed in random, suggestive clothing. What would you call them, swim suits? Bandages? Something that would make you want to tell her to wear something normal. It seems some rocket booster like things are growing out of that bandage-like outfit allowing the girl to fly and leave a trail of stardust.

And somehow she is carrying this huge staff, of a fancy mechanical design, easily with one hand.

It's something that would make Ryofu Housen scared.[1] Apparently it's for combat. Its evil purpose to take down and crush enemies was easily imaginable.

How fearsome.

And…

At the top of the package, what would most likely be the title was printed in a roundish font.

'Stardust Witch Meruru Limited First Edition'. What in the world?

I've gone through all this explanation, but in short it's anime… I guess. Though it's been quite a while since I stopped watching anime, so I don't really understand.

And why is this kind of thing lying here?

Right when that question popped up in my head and I was sitting there in the entrance with the 'Stardust Witch Meruru' thing in my hands, the door swung wide open.

"I'm home! Oh, what are you doing there, Kyousuke? Curling up like a fetus in the entrance hall?"

"It's nothing, mom. I'm just getting some fresh air.'

That was close! I would have become a social outcast!

But no problem. I was able to hunch over and hide that thing the moment the door opened.

Jeez, that sure was close.

I don't know who did this, but it must be a trap for me. If I was found with something like this, I would surely be prosecuted in a family conference.

I can imagine Kirino looking at me like some garbage.

Mom, carrying a shopping bag, looks at my strange figure in pity.

"I heard from the lady next door that psychological counseling aimed at students is gaining popularity recently."

"W-Wait a second. I'm perfectly sane. Uhh yeah, I just studied a bit too much today you know?"

"Liar. How would you study so much that you would get that stressed?"

What cruel parents. Why can't you trust your child more?

"Of course I do. You know my grades aren't that bad."

"But that's because of Manami-chan, isn't it? Why are you the one who's proud when you have a smart childhood friend as your tutor? You would never study alone."

"Damn."

That was absolutely true, so I can't talk back. Also, I've been reading a manga until 5 minutes ago.

I crawled on the floor like a centipede while hiding the 'Stardust Witch Meruru' under my shirt, and escaped from the scene. My mom says to my back,

"Kyousuke, I don't mind it, but you might want to stop opening porn books in the entrance hall."

Very close answer but wrong. It's amazing of my mom to suspect that much from my strange actions. Her history of cleaning my room without my consent and revealing my hidden collection isn't for nothing.

However, what I'm hiding now is something much more serious than those, in a way.

"Phew."

I take the thing out from under my stomach, and hold it high up above my head with my right hand. I wipe away the sweat with my left knuckle. Mission accomplished. I'm really used to doing this sort of gesture. I'll try not to say why, but you healthy school boys should all know what I want to say.

"…and I ended up bringing it with me,"

I murmur while taking a glance at the 'Stardust Witch Meruru' case.

Oh well, it couldn't be helped when the situation was like that. Since I was also looking for an excuse to not study and it's true I was also greatly intrigued by this ' forbidden object'.

I shall be cancelling today's entrance exam study session due to serious issues and examine this thing.

My room is 6 tatami mats large and includes a bed, a desk, a book shelf with textbooks and manga and a closet .

My carpet is yellow green and my curtains are blue. On the wall, there's a Japanese style calendar that my

mom got from the local town-council, and there are no posters.

The only other thing is a boombox, I don't have a computer, TV or video games.

See? I'm quite average. It's my policy to live as normally as possible and it fits my tastes.

By the way, I've almost given up on trying to hide my porn books so they are all stored in a cardboard box under my bed. And I begged my mom not to clean under my bed. There's no assurance that my mom would ratify that treaty, and even if she had been checking for updates on my collection every day, there's no way that I would know.

Well, I deliberately forget about that. To defend my own self confidence.

The only defense I have is to try to make a safer choice, just in case to defend myself if I get spotted and prosecuted in a family meeting.

…Seriously where do people who don't have their own rooms hide this stuff?

I can only imagine forgetting about it and leaving it all open as the possible defense plan. I might be spoiled, to be able to worry about such small things like being unable to lock my room.

Traveling through those deep thoughts only took me a few seconds in reality.

I sat on my bed and loosened my legs. I pick up the DVD case with one hand and make a thinking pose with my other hand.

"The more I look at it, the more it tells me that the package doesn't suit my room."

Under the florescent light, the Stardust Witch's smile glitters. It's scary in a sense that she's making a smile while holding a weapon of mass destruction.

"Hmm."

And yeah, this thing, whose is it?

I imagine the faces of the Kousaka family members one by one, but as I expected I couldn't find a suitable owner for 'Stardust Witch Meruru'.

Of course, I don't remember this anime ever airing in my living room either.

(At the time, I didn't even know computers could play DVDs.)

So what does this mean? Why was this there?

While I continued to wonder, I opened the case…

"Wha-!?"

I received another shock more intense than when I found this anime DVD box.

In short, inside the DVD case there was no 'Stardust Witch Meruru' DVD. In place of it, there was some other DVD.

…Well it does happen often. Like when I get tired of placing the CDs I listen to back into their proper cases and sometimes shuffle them around.

And later I get confused as to which CD is where.

The owner of this must have been lazy like that too and had placed a different DVD in this 'Stardust Witch Meruru' DVD case.

Yeah, I understand. It happens.

But, but, well…

Why is the title of the DVD, 'Let's Make Love With Your Sister!' Of all choices, who is seducing who into doing what?

And what is this charming R-18 notice thing that shouldn't be there?

"Calm down!"

My breathing became heavy as the sweat drops collected on my forehead.

This was serious. Dead serious. What was serious? That scene where I encountered my mom.

Had she found out the contents, I would have had to commit suicide. Is this really a trap for me to fall into? I don't understand this kind of thing, but my instincts are

raising an alarm. What's this dark aura coming from the title? Even if it didn't have this charming R-18 notice, I can still understand from the title. This is in no way something that I should be allowed to have!

"Kyousuke, are you studying properly?"

"Aaaaaaagh!?"

I screamed like the world had ended, and ducked under my bed blanket.

I make a glance towards the door. My mom who opened the door without knocking, seemed shocked at the crazy reaction her son had shown.

"Sorry, is this a bad time?"

"Oh don't mind it mom, I was just having voice training. Rather, knock will you?"

"Yes. I'm sorry. I'll do so from now on."

With an expression that's apparently trying to hide her shock, my mom closes the door.

Oh shit. I did manage to hide the thing, but I'm sure I made a really bad misunderstanding. Damn.

I'm really having bad luck today. This and that, all of the blame falls on to this thing.

While still under my bed blanket, I stare at the mysterious DVD case.

"Damn!"

If things have come to this, I've got to find the owner of this thing no matter what.

I make a "half-blaming-someone else"-like pledge.

But I've become even more puzzled.

I mean about the owner of this DVD. The fact that inside the DVD case of 'Stardust Witch Meruru', contained something with absolute suspicion, 'Let's Make Love With Your Sister!'

If my suspicions are correct, then the person that this belongs to should own both 'Stardust Witch Meruru' and 'Let's Make Love With Your Sister'.

And by guessing from the fact that it was from somewhere like in the back of our house's shoe closet, there's a high chance that its owner is either my sister, my mom, my father or me…

Of course, people not from my family enter our house too, so I can't completely disregard the 'outsider culprit theory'.

But who would deliberately put in 'Let's Make Love With Your Sister!' into the casing of 'Stardust Witch Meruru' and place it behind the shoe closet? I can't imagine anybody doing that at all.

"Ugh."

Anyway, I think the 'outsider culprit theory' is a waste of time even trying to think about, so I will begin thinking under the assumption that someone in my family is the culprit.

My sister, mom, dad, and me… Assuming the culprit is one of them, who would be considered the most suspicious? Who in the family is most likely to have items like 'Stardust Witch Meruru' and 'Let's Make Love With Your Sister!'?

"Unfortunately it's me. And that's the problem."

Of course, it isn't me for sure. That's only the conclusion of who is the most likely person in the family to have it. Well, it did make me quite sad just by thinking about it.

Anyway, it isn't mine. Since I'm not even interested in that anime stuff. Well, there's some people in my classroom who talk about things like that, but I don't have much to do with them.

But that might be the same for everyone in my family as well.

Lead to the obvious conclusion, I held my head down and wondered.

But look, it can't be Mom, and Dad is absolutely a person form stone age so he can't possibly use a DVD player… And that hard ass Yakuza face watching and enjoying anime? No way. And then my sister is… the first one I should remove as a suspect. She might have been watching anime around 5 years ago, but I guess she only watches the popular drama and music programs lately.

Childish anime DVDs are definitely not one of Kirino's hobbies.

I can't ever imagine her buying and watching some ' Stardust Witch Meruru' DVD. Just speaking of 'Let's Make Love With Your Sister!' sends shivers down my spine, since it's Kirino. She's a trendy middle school girl so she must have gone to a goukon again today.[2]

"Okay, I give up. I don't get it at all."

My line of thought hit a dead end. As I thought, I don't think there is a culprit in my family, but if I suspect outsiders then there's too many suspects to even count.

Okay, this is screwed. I don't seem to have talent as a detective.

So then, what do I do? Should I quit now since it's tiresome?

No, on second thought, it still bothers me. I will surely find the culprit.

I'm surprised at myself, but at that point of time I was really outgoing. I would have usually given up the search and had a nap till dinner. And if I had done so, the peaceful days may have continued.

But that didn't happen. Since I, under my own will, decided not to end the search on this matter. Of course I didn't know at this point, but I must have decided my own fate myself by doing so.

About this subject, I will be stepping on a super large class landmine…

Dinner at my home begins at 7PM sharp. That's because my dad comes home at around this time. If I don 't go to the dining room at that time, my dinner is gone no matter what.

The time now is 06:45PM. While scratching my head, I leave my room and down the stairs… but I stop walking. That was because, in my vision, I spotted the figure of Kirino at the entrance hall.

Oh, she came back.

Come to think of it, her curfew was still 6:30. Whether that is too early or late is another question, but she seems to obey it. Well, even though she might look like a high schooler, she is still a middle school student.

By the way, today Kirino was wearing a black and white T-shirt, with something like a mix between black boxers and a skirt. I don't really know but, Ces- whatever was the brand. If someone were to say she was a fashion model, everyone would believe it.

…Damn, how cute you are.

But, I don't want to get too close to this prissy sister.

Since she seems to hate me, it's better off not getting close to her. Arguments won't change whether we are siblings or not.

We somehow have to deal with it.

So yeah, I wait for Kirino to go to the dining hall in the middle of the stairs.

"Huh?"

But she seems a bit strange. If she opens the door, there's the living room, but she doesn't go that way and instead is still standing around the entrance hall.

…What the heck is she doing?

Since it's stupid to stay here, I went down the stairs.

I stood in front of the door to the living room and put my hand on the knob.

"…"

I looked back a little.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

"Huh?"

She stared at me with a horrifying face.

…Damn. Why do I try to talk to her, when I know this is going to happen?

Am I an idiot?

"Heh, nothing."

I click my tongue and turn the knob strongly.

On the dinner table, curry and miso soup was there for dinner. This room, where our family meets for supper, is a combined kitchen-dining-living room, so there are no dividers and is roomy.

My sister and I line up in our seats, my dad and mom sit across us.

On TV, the anchor is reading out about how the foreign exports are and other important news.

My father quietly drinks his miso soup. He dresses in traditional Japanese clothes after bathing, so his heavy atmosphere is multiplied and makes him look like a yakuza. However, it's actually the other way around, he works for the police.

On the other hand, my mom sits next to him biting through her Fukujinzuke.[3] She looks absolutely like a house wife. She doesn't resemble Kirino at all.

My sister is silent. She is normally cold to us family members. From watching her eat her meal without a word, I can definitely say she resembles her father. Especially his sharp sight and other stuff.

By the way, people often say I have the same atmosphere as my mother.

Our dinner table like this, looks very ordinary and is very fine.

Of course, I was eating my curry while thinking of the chance to get that plan into action.

Of course it's a plan to find out the owner of that DVD.

…Well I call it a plan, but it's nothing too complicated. It's pretty straightforward and simple.

What I mean is, since thinking and suspecting alone won't get me anywhere, I will try to make an attempt to stutter the suspect. And here is a perfect situation for that .

After I sip some of the Asari[4] miso soup, I asked a question not aimed at anyone in particular.

"Hey I'm going to the convenience store after dinner, is there anything you want me to get while I'm there?"

"Oh, then get me the new Häagen Dazs thing. The limited seasonal edition thing."

"Okay."

Making some idle conversation with my mother first, I start my attack.

"By the way, one of my friends is now really into anime for girls. If I remember right, it was called Stardust something…"

"Why that all of the sudden?"

The first one who reacted to my hint was my mom. No way…

"Well he just recommended it to me, saying it was interesting. So I might watch it once."

"Oh no, that's what they call otakuism, right? Like the show on TV… You shouldn't become like them, okay? Right, father?"

My mom asks my dad. He blankly responds,

"Yes, you don't need to deliberately bring bad influence upon yourself."

Hmm, so you have that kind of attitude towards it. They don't know about it too much, but they normally don't have a good impression about it. People like me don't care what hobbies people have since it doesn't matter.

But, since it's useless to argue with my parents here, I made a blank 'yeah' response.

They are speaking their thoughts openly and my father was out of the question in the first place. He wouldn't have a DVD that he'd not know how to use.

So by elimination, the suspect left is…

I quietly glanced at Kirino sitting next to me.

"…"

Kirino was biting her lip strongly, as if she was using every single muscle in her body, and her chopsticks in her hands were shaking. Uhh what? You're kidding right !?

"Kirino?"

Mom asks Kirino lightly, seeing my sister acting strange.

"Thank you for the meal."

She stands up and quickly heads out of the room, seemingly in rage.

She slams the door shut and climbs the stairs with a stomp.

The people left behind are in shock.

"What is wrong with her?"

"I-I wonder."

I make a halfhearted response to my mom who is puzzled. Honestly, I don't know what to do either.

What is she angry for? What part of that conversation would have made Kirino mad? If she was the culprit and noticed my hints, then it's even more strange.

If she was acting normally, she wouldn't get all apparently worried and make me notice. What's wrong? I don't understand at all, Kirino.

"Heh."

But her attitude wasn't normal. I can consider that as a sign that she responded to my hints.

Of course, I don't believe this was enough to condemn her as a suspect. It's just that I suspect someone in the family is responsible for it… It meaning "Stardust Witch Meruru" that is…

Was it… my sister?

"Mother, call Kirino down later."

Father's displeased voice resounds heavily in the dining room. Oh great. She's in trouble. Not that I'm responsible for it.

If I assume that the DVD is Kirino's, then a lot of things will surely make sense.

She must have dropped it this evening when she bumped into me. That thing, which would have been in her bag, found itself between the shoe closet and the wall when it dropped out.

And Kirino realized she had lost the thing after she arrived at her destination.

That's why she was looking for something in the entrance hall before supper.

If I were to add to that, if my assumption that she put the wrong DVD in the case is correct, she was supposed to bring "Stardust Witch Meruru" and not "Let's Make Love With Your Sister!".

…Well anyway, I can't imagine what kind of business she would have that requires her to bring something like that. I thought she was having a mass date, but middle school girls don't bring anime DVDs to mass dates. So, I can be quite sure she went to see a friend.

"Hmm…"

I don't get it at all. I still can't believe there's a relationship between Kirino and anime for kids. Look, it'

s Kirino we're talking about. It's impossible. Something's got to be wrong. I did make this 'Kirino is the Culprit' theory, but I still had almost no faith in it.

…Oh well, maybe I'll dig in a bit deeper.

"Thanks for the meal."

After eating my supper, I left the dining room. I go to my room for my wallet and purposely say aloud in front of my room.

"Alright. I should head out to the convenience store."

…Heh I have no talent as an actor. Who cares. I know I can't do it well anyways. Rather, it's some cheap trick that I'd be surprised at if she actually fell for.

Making large thuds, I go down the stairs and close the door with a bang.

Leaving the house, I take the path to the convenience store. Instead of heading for the convenience store, however, I take a different path leading to the back of my home.

What am I up to? Well, I put myself in the culprit's shoes. If Kirino was the culprit then she would have realized by now that it was me who picked up the thing.

So then, if I were Kirino, what would I do?

The best solution would be to recover the thing before I noticed and then pretend she knows nothing about it. That's the only option.

Kirino was apparently acting strange at that time. She wasn't being cool. If so, she might lose her patience and begin searching for the thing. So I set up a simple trap, even though the chances that she would fall for it are low .

"Well… still it'll never work out, right?"

I whisper to myself while slipping through the back door to my home, and silently climb the stairs. I swung the door open.

Creak

"Hey… What are you doing?"

"…Wha-?!"

Huh?! No way! She really was in here…

Uh, how surprised can you be?

Kirino, on all fours in the middle of the room, looks back at me with a face that's all blue.

It's like she's frightened. Regardless, she still looks at me like I'm garbage, and it stabbed my heart.

"…I said, what are you doing?"

"…It's none of your business."

With her ass facing me, she speaks to me with a tone that seems to want to take a bite out of me. Possibly from her nervousness, she's breathing hard.

"…Of course it does. How would you feel if someone were to break into your room and begin a search?"

And out of all the places, you're searching through my hidden porn book collection.

With my suppressed anger, I tell her coldly.

"…"

Kirino looks aside silently. Is it from her anger that her cheeks are becoming flaming red? She then slowly stands up and walks toward me without a word.

"Out of my way."

"No way. Answer my question. What were you doing here?"

"Get out of my way!"

"I know already. You were searching for this."

I was secretly afraid of my sister, who had been raging a foot away from me. Still, I reveal the DVD Case for " Stardust Witch Meruru" hidden underneath my shirt. Kirino's reaction was dramatic.

"That…?!"

"Oops."

She shoots out her hand with a demonic face, but expecting this, I evade.

Throwing a fake expression of coolness, I tap the DVD case with my hand.

"Heh… So this was yours after all."

"…Of course not!"

She says in a highly frustrated voice. Hey, what you're saying is inconsistent with your actions.

"Oh, so this isn't yours? Well, I picked it up this evening in the entrance hall. I thought maybe you dropped it when you bumped into me."

"That's definitely not… It's not mine. W-Why would I watch such a… childish… anime? No way I would… right?"

Looks like she won't ever admit it. This is going to take forever.

"If you weren't looking for this, then what did you come into my room for?"

"Well… that's…!"

"That's? What?"

I try to make her continue, but she keeps silent again.

"…"

She shakes her shoulder from frustration and looks down.

It's apparent that Kirino is feeling extreme humiliation from my questioning.

Well, it must feel like being accused of possessing a porn book by someone I hate. It surely must be frustrating and so embarrassing that you would feel like killing yourself.

"…"

She looks at me in silence with strong hostility, like she 's looking at some guy who killed her parents.

…Damn why do I have to be seen by my sister with such hatred?

Damn it. It's getting really stupid. I don't really care about her. Why must I do something so uneasy? Oh fine, I quit.

"Here."

I carelessly shove the DVD case to my sister's breast. Kirino still keeps her expression of hatred and looks up at me.

"It's important to you right? I'm going to give it back, so take it."

"I-I said it's not min-"

"Then throw it away for me."

"Huh?"

She looks up at my face with a 'what do you mean?' expression.

What's that face for? I'm not trying to have fun abusing my sister. I just wanted to know whose DVD this

was, and that's been solved. I can't go on with this forever. Of course I'd never say this out loud. Instead, I speak using well thought out lines.

"Sorry, it must have been my misunderstanding. I understand well that it's not yours. I don't know whose it is, but I have no use for it, so along with apologies, I want to ask you to get rid of it. Would you throw it away for me?"

After I make this much compromise, finally Kirino speaks up.

"Well… Fine."

And then takes the DVD case. I step aside and open the door, and then Kirino leaves the room. I proceed to step into my room.

"Phew."

Jeez, how long has it been since I talked that much to my sister?

Man, I'm so tired. I slump into the bed and look up into the ceiling.

That was when I heard my sister's voice, who I thought had already gone away.

"Hey…"

"Huh?"

Oh, she was still here. How troublesome. Just go away.

I look at her, and she was shyly looking at me. What a commendable expression it was, one that she would normally never show me. Uhh… what? What's the matter? I suddenly felt worried and ask her. "What?"

"You think it's wrong… right?"

"What is?"

"Well… It's just a hypothetical question but, you know … if I had… these… do you think it's wrong… I'm asking…"

…heh.

"Not really. I don't think it's wrong."

I click my tongue in my heart and answer. I wanted to get her out of my room as soon as possible and if I answered differently she would surely get mad.

…Jeez why are you acting like you want to pick a fight ?

I returned it to you in a way that would hurt your pride the least. And this was your mess up in the first place. So there's no reason to get angry at me, rather you should be thanking me.

"…You really think so? Really?"

"Yeah. Whatever hobby you might have, I won't look down on you, ever."

…Since it has nothing to do with me.

"Really? Absolutely?"

"Man, you don't trust me. I said really. Believe me."

I wasn't really so serious with my words, but it looks like Kirino was satisfied with my words.

"I see… Hmm…"

She made a few nods and then held tightly on to the " Stardust Witch Meruru" and ran off. Somehow this scene makes me feel nostalgic. I feel something like this happened in the past too. I've forgotten about it though.

"At least close the door, will you?"

I complain and then collapse onto the bed.

And so for two days, nothing out of the ordinary happened. Kirino and I were back to normal. No conversation, no eye contact, and keeping the distance of a stranger. While I got to see an interesting aspect of my sister, I didn't try to do anything about it, thinking I'd just forget about it quickly.

Well, it did interest me why my sister had something like that.

But still, I didn't feel like digging into my sister's secrets. It's just asking for too much trouble.

But…

Late one night…

I was having a good night's sleep, when I felt a sharp sting on my cheek.

"Whoa?!"

That's a good wake up call. Looks like I got slapped on my cheek.

What? A burglar? I open my eyes in surprise.

"!!"

It's bright. It looks like the lights in my room are on. I feel something heavy on my stomach, but it doesn't look like I'm tied up. It's a job half done for a burglar...

Uhh hey!

"Hey you!"

Recognizing the attacker, I open my eyes wide in amazement. My heart's pounding from the sudden night attack.

"…Be quiet."

The attacker was actually Kirino in her pajamas. She was on all fours like she was covering me while I was trying to get up in my bed. My sister's face without makeup is right near my face.

"Hey, you! What the heck do you-"

"I told you to be quiet! What time do you think it is now?"

I voice my protest while Kirino threatens me quietly.

What time you think it is now? That would be my line.

Rather… I'm in my own bed, late at night, with my sister on top of me, looking into my face inches from me. What the heck is this situation? It might look like some scene from a love-comedy but my heart is about to explode, in the wrong sense.

"Uhh… Getting off the bed is a good starting point,"

I say to her, trying to calm my breathing. My sister did what I told her, apparently with a disgusted expression.

Surely if it was some other woman, I would be disturbed (with another reason than being surprised). But if it's my sister, she's just heavy. No matter how good she looks, I can't count her as being a woman.

All brothers with sisters would agree with this.

"Heh…"

I poke my temple with my finger and ask with a sigh,

"And so, what was your intention?"

"… I have something to tell you, so come."

Why are you getting angry? I should be the one since I've been suddenly beaten in the cheek. Yet, I'm still treating her properly. Aren't I a nice person?

"Something you want to tell me, at such a late hour?"

"Yep."

"I'm really sleepy you know. Could we do this tomorrow?"

I apparently said that in an unhappy manner, but Kirino didn't nod her head in agreement.

Rather she gave me an 'are you stupid?' kind of expression.

"Tomorrow won't do. It has to be now."

"Why?"

"…It just has to be."

All right. She won't tell me why and she won't change her line of thought either. How selfish can this woman be ?

I want to ignore this crazy talk and go back to sleep, but too bad my eyes are wide open now. I answer her even though it's tiring.

"…And where are we going?"

"…To my room."

With a look as if she found her parent's killer, she tugged my collar.

I give up resisting and unwillingly follow her.

"I just have to go, right? Jeez."

Oh what is this, really.

My sister's room is right next door. Last spring when Kirino entered middle school, Dad gave her this room. It'

s a rarely used Japanese style room converted into a western style one and I've never been inside before.

I thought I'd never do so in the future either, but of all times, I never thought I'd be invited late in the night. I could have imagined it to happen in the morning, since I still think that this is a joke or something.

"You can come in…"

"OK…"

Lead by Kirino, I step into my sister's room for the first time. I have no real special feelings, but it's strangely sweet smelling.

Hmm… It's larger than my room.

It's about 8 tatami mats wide, with a bed, a closet, a desk, a bookshelf, a mirror, CD rack, and various other things.

The interior wasn't much different from my room, except with a more reddish coloring.

However the big difference is that it has a computer desk.

It suits my image of Kirino well, not being the individualist, but quite modern.

"What are you looking at?"

"I'm not looking."

Unbelievable. You lead me here and you say it like that?

Kirino sits on the bed, and points to the ground.

"Sit."

You say it like it's completely natural, but sister, this position is like the judge and criminal in a courtroom.

"Hey, at least give me a cushion"

"…"

With a very disgusted frown, she throws over a cushion of a cat.

I happily put the cat's face under my ass and sit.

Jeez, she really seems to hate having me touching her possessions. Does she think I spread germs or something ? Are girls of this age all like this? Oh, how evil.

"And…?"

I look up. Kirino still looks cross and all flustered. Then after a deep breath, she quietly speaks out.

"I have…"

"What?"

You're speaking too quietly. I can't hear you. After I asked, her expression becomes even more mean.

"As I said, I have something to consult with you about. "

Oh, that's quite an unexpected line. I thought I heard wrongly, and I ask again.

"What did you say?"

"I want to consult you about life."

"…"

For a long moment, I was shocked and went silent, blinking countless times.

Because, well you know… It's my sister. She hates me like some dung beetle. And what did she ask me? She wants to consult me about life? Wow. It must be a dream. After this, I wouldn't be surprised even if Godzilla were to come and attack the town.

With my dead dry throat, I managed to speak up.

"Consult about life? You consulting me?"

"Yes."

Kirino nodded clearly. Hey hey… You serious?

"You told me last time."

"What?"

"That it's not wrong for me to have those kinds of things…"

She isn't talking too clearly. It's like she's a little upset.

"That kind of thing… You mean the stuff I asked you to throw away?"

"Yes…"

Why does that topic come up now?

Feeling strange, I answer "Yeah, I did."

"And what does that have to do with it?"

"You really won't… look down on me…?"

Is it really ok for me to talk to her? I begin to wonder.

I say to my sister who still looks at me in suspicion,

"Don't make me repeat myself. I said I won't look down on you, ever."

I don't care a bit about your hobbies, really. You woke me up just to make sure of this?

"A-Absolutely, really true?"

"Absolutely, surely, really, truly, true."

"I won't forgive you if it's a lie."

"Yeah, do as you wish."

Jeez, give me a break. What is this?

I begin to feel tired. Meanwhile Kirino seems to have made up her mind and stands up, walking towards the bookshelf.

…Huh? What are you going to do?

Beside me, who's puzzled, Kirino pulled on one of the two bookshelves. I am amazed at how easily it was moved around, but after a second look, I realized all the contents have been pulled out and already stacked on her bed.

With one of the bookshelves that filled the wall gone, a huge space opens up.

"H-Hey, what are you doing…?"

Kirino doesn't answer my question but pushes the other bookshelf (which is half filled with books) with her shoulder into the open space.

Little by little, the thick bookshelf moves. What was revealed was a Japanese style door not matching this western style room. A hidden storage space.

"Wow…"

Kirino lets a breath out and says,

"When I entered middle school and got this room, they remade this room into a western style room, right? I don't know why but this was probably left over from that time. I only discovered it during the last year's year end cleaning, though…"

"I see…"

Maybe Dad pinched some pennies. If the bookshelf is there no one will realize it…

"So the consultation about life… is about the contents in there?"

Kirino nodded. But with her hand on the door, she's not going to open it.

"…"

With a difficult expression she looks into my face.

Leading up till now, even someone as dull as me would have figured out what's inside there, along with the reason why she's hesitating.

…Consultation about life, eh? Why ask me?

Surely I said I won't look down on her regardless of her hobby but still…

"Hmm…"

I put myself in Kirino's shoes.

Well, there's two kinds of consultations about life.

One type is the most common type, asking someone who can relate to your issue and can be entrusted to it.

For this type, you would want to think it through together with the consultant, about your concern or problem, and find a solution.

And the other kind is consulting a complete outsider.

In this case, you aren't looking for useful advice at all and just want someone to listen to you.

And as for Kirino's case, I'm definitely not someone who knows about the issue and can be trusted upon it.

Then it means…

If Kirino's concern is what I think it to be, then it would be difficult to consult someone.

She would be afraid of destroying her personal image. She doesn't really have a choice of who to consult. There' s only one person who she can consult openly, which is me.

Someone who knows what she wants to consult about and doesn't mind how she will be considered after the consultation. That would be me.

Okay so that's how it is. After understanding most of what my sister's situation is, I tell her, wanting to complete the job and go back to sleep as soon as possible,

"Don't worry. Whatever comes out of there, I will never look down on you, and if you tell me to keep it a secret, I will never tell anyone. Okay?"

Hearing my well thought out words of kindness, Kirino nods again and mutters,

"…It's a promise,"

before she opens the forbidden door.

rolling sound

thud

"Huh? Something fell out…"

Before witnessing the revealed contents of the closet, I carelessly pick up the object that fell out.

It was again a DVD case and…

Its title was "Let's Make Love With Your Sister! -Sister Maker ver. 1.4-"

ahem ahem ahem ahem …?!

I coughed up big time.

I-Is this the original game? Come to think of it, it wasn't just the anime, but she also possessed this! I'm shocked. At what? At the erotic package with a half naked, blushing girl embracing herself! And what? This was a series?

"Wh-What is this?"

"Oh that? Well it was first a series on PS2, but after porting to PC, it became a completely different series. It's a classic, but it's a little old and the contents are a bit hard, definitely not for a beginner."

I didn't ask that! What do you mean by a beginner in the first place? Are you some kind of pro? You are a pro, right? Damn, I have too many questions to ask. This is way past my skill level!

Wh-What's happening here?

Have I stepped into another world? Someone tell me!

The first strike in the head from the title "Let's Make Love With Your Sister" already made me groggy. But as for Kirino, it was nothing more than a light jab.

"…Heh."

Sweating heavily, I look up and peer into the forbidden open abyss.

The inside of the closet looks normal at first look. It had a top and bottom shelf and was dimly lit.

But the goods piled up were of an even stranger variety.

What catches the eye was the large number of cases piled high on the top shelf.

"What are… those boxes?"

Kirino answers proudly, while handing me a few of the cases.

Most were from the "Sister Maker EX series" and just a list of the titles are like this:

"Super Step Sister" "Let's Play With Your Sisters (heart)" "Tengentoppa 12 Sisters" "Final Weapon Sister" … Well, you get the picture.

I have a lot of comments that I'd like to make, but if I say the wrong thing, I'll definitely end up in a hellish situation. I first begin with what I hope wasn't a touchy question.

"Why is the box… so big?"

"That, I don't know. But it's like that."

She reveals one of the world's mysteries solemnly. I don't get it. I don't really get it. I don't get anything at all.

gulp While holding back the dangerous question that 's about to come out of my mouth anytime, I glance at the lower shelf.

In there were more huge boxes lined up.

Those boxes were larger than PC game boxes and were not of uniform size. Some had pictures of girls and others were glittery colored.

"What… are these?"

"DVD boxes for anime. All of these here are special box editions."

"DVD boxes? Special box edition?"

It's sad but I can't do more than repeat what she said.

"Yep. Like the final edition with the episodes touched up, a bonus disk, special booklet, and other specials are packed in it. Haha! Aren't they great?"

"You mean… the Stardust Witch thing?"

"Yes."

Kirino seems a bit excited.

Is she so happy to reveal her prized collection to someone that she hates so much like me? I'm almost about to crack up and laugh. It's quite an unusual feeling .

Anyway, this question comes to my mind.

"By the way, aren't these rather expensive?"

"Umm, well somewhat. Well this one is… 41,790 yen… This one is 55,000 yen. And this one is…"

"That's expensive as hell! What part of that was somewhat?"

"Is that so much? It's the same price of one or two pieces of clothing."

"Where does all that money come from?! You're a middle school student! Your sense of economy is screwed already at the age of 14!"

After saying this, I felt that I made the wrong comment .

Oh crap, maybe that's a really delicate matter. I might not want to hear the answer…

As if she didn't notice my worries, she simply says,

"Where? From my pay, of course."

"I-I see."

Pay, huh? Well if it's pay then it's fine…

Err no no no not at all!

I ask her with a half fearsome face.

"You said pay?"

"Yes."

"What is that? What kind of work do you get paid for?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I work as a model for a magazine."

"A-A model for a magazine? Like those nude photos on the front?"

"Completely wrong… Are your ears rotten or something? I said I'm a model! I'm an exclusive reader's model!"

Her eyes filled with scorn that hurt my heart. I didn't know the real difference between a model and a nude model, but I guess I made a completely wrong remark.

Perhaps she got tired of seeing my confused look and took a magazine from the shelf, throwing it at me.

It was one of those so called teen magazines. It has an extremely glittery title on a book background and lots of inflaming lines like “seize the future.”

“…”

Flipping through the pages, I see my usual sister in various places. I don’t really get it, but it seems my sister is making cool poses with the ‘most vogue’ clothes.

Wow… she looked like a model, but I never thought she was actually one.

I shouldn’t really care what she does or where she does it, but why do I feel a little irritated? I don’t know why, but I made some nasty comments.

“What the heck is with this pose? Was your back hurting or something?”

“Are you dumb?”

Why do I sense some dismay in her eyes that are still filled with scorn?

I feel even worse after she then looks away from me. I try to fix the situation.

"Well… I guess, you look cute?"

What the heck am I telling my sister? Well… It's not a lie though.

"Rather, isn't this one of those better known magazines? Even I know the title so… Could you be some great personality or something?"

"Hmm? Oh, this isn't such a big deal."

She really seems to enjoy getting praised, even from someone like me. She's not even trying to conceal her happiness.

Since the evil mood had been repaired, I get back to the topic that was cut short.

"And err… How much do you get paid?"

"Hmm… If I remember right…"

Hearing my sister's response, I shrug heavily.

Oh come on… They're giving way too much to a kid.

"So you get it now? Me working on my cuteness everyday is part of my job."

"Yeah, sure…"

But yeah… the readers of this magazine wouldn't even imagine that the cool styled model is actually spending her earnings on stuff like "Let's Make Love With Your Sister" or "Let's have Fun with your Sister (heart)".

Rather, if her fans ever found that out, they'd surely faint and drop.

While feeling all the agony in the world, I try to look into the depths of the closet.

However, Kirino, who is on her knees, opens both her hands and blocks me.

"I-I can't show you any more tonight."

"Why not?"

Well, it's not that I want to see more, but I thought you won't let me go until I saw everything and all.

Kirino takes a look into the depths and then glares at me.

Oh please quit looking at me as if you're looking at some garbage.

"I… don't trust you yet, so this is the limit for now."

"Huh?"

What is with her? What the heck is she talking about? From the way she says it, it makes it seem like that was nothing, and that there's something even more bizarre. Oh wait, erm… You DO have something? You do huh?

"The stuff further inside are a bit embarrassing so… No."

"…I see."

Whaaat? What kind of things could make her embarrassed? She just showed me "Let's Make Love With Your Sister" so proudly. I become silent from the extreme surprise when Kirino starts speaking. She's right in front of me, on all fours, looking up at me.

"So how is it?"

"What do you mean by that?"

What kind of answer does she want? If someone knows, please tell me now.

I struggle to provide an answer, and Kirino is getting somewhat antsy.

"Well, you know, like, how you feel after having seen my hobby."

"Oh yes… How I feel, heh… Erm… I'm surprised."

"That's it?"

"Well, you're asking me to say more? But you know, I'm just so surprised I can't make out any other remarks."

I try to be sensitive and say so, however Kirino makes a worried face with her well styled eyebrows and blurts out,

"…It must be wrong for me to have these kind of things."

"…Well I don't think so."

It's not a matter of right or wrong.

…So I guess this was the matter Kirino wanted to consult me about.

Anyhow, I really want to go to sleep and forget about this. Maybe she will let me go now?

Since I'm desperate to get out of this room, I give a comment that I think my sister would surely want.

"I told you already. Regardless of whatever hobby you have, I will never look down on you. Isn't that fine? Everyone is permitted to choose their own hobbies. As long as it's not causing someone else trouble you should be free to choose what you want to do. Besides, it's the money that you earned yourself. Nobody has the right to say anything about it."

"True. Heh… You do say good things every now and then."

All right, she's satisfied. Good. Now it's time for me to leave…

And my butt was halfway up before I decided to sit down again.

Actually, there was something I really wanted to ask about the entire time and had been holding it back.

If I go about it wrong, I might get an out of this world answer, so I thought I would try not asking, and forgetting about it, but oh well, I can't hold it back anymore.

It's like someone from another realm is commanding me to ask her now, as soon as possible. Well surely I'm imagining things.

"Heh…"

All right. I'm going to ask now. I'm going to do so! Am I ready to deal with the issue calmly even if I get a bizarre answer?

"Kirino, about what we were talking back before… There is one I thing I want to ask you."

"Huh? That formality of yours is so unreal."

Brat… Is that how to talk to your own brother who completely accepted your hobbies?

From the looks of this, this probably won't end up in the worst possible way.

Phew… After a sigh of relief, I ask her.

"So, why do you have these hentai games about little sisters?"

"…"

Err… Why are you so silent here? Say something will you?

"…Why do you think I do?"

"N-No idea… I just wonder…"

W-W-W-Wait a second why do you have to blush and get all pink in the face?

Why are you crawling towards me on all fours?

N-N-No way! Please, stop that! I don't have those kinds of interests!

Fearing for my own safety, I slowly take several steps back as if I am shaken from fear.

"Why are you backing away?"

"I'm not."

"Lies. You are."

"That's because you are… Oops"

O-Oh no… I backed into the wall. I can't go back any further.

I could have quickly run off, but I wasn't calm enough. All I could do was look around the room frantically. And before I realized it, she was able to get even closer to me.

"…"

Then, Kirino's expression changed to a serious one, like she had made up her mind on something important.

That serious look from her eyes stabs straight into my eyes. I'm paralyzed by Kirino's eyes. I can't take my eyes off her. The air was tense.

And then on all fours, she gets on top of me…

She shoved the copy of "Let's Make Love With Your Sister" in front of my nose.

"Huh?"

I was not expecting this to happen, I am speechless. She doesn't seems to care about my reaction and changing into a rather romantic blushing tone, she says,

"When you look at this package, don't you feel like… it's somehow nice?"

"W-What are you talking about?"

I don't get it. From the moment I stepped into this room, how many times has that phrase come up in my mind? Out of all the times, Kirino's last comment was very incomprehensible.

"You know…"

She gives me a blank look as if she thinks that I'm the strange one for not understanding.

"…It's really cute!"

Err what is? Your comments aren't specific.

I must have had a quite puzzled look.

I knew I wouldn't get a better answer from rewording the question, so I let my brain work hard to try to decipher what my sister meant.

"…"

There are two clues. The package she holds right in front of my nose and her comment just now saying "It's really cute".

Of course you would normally only have one answer, but isn't that really wrong? It sure is, right? I can't quite accept it but I still ask her cautiously.

"So what you're saying is… Err… You like 'little sisters'? And this is the reason why you have a lot of those games?"

"Uh huh!"

Correct answer! She gave me a really cheerful nod… Why is she so proud of this?

Oh, I really wish she was so cheerful like that all the time.

I was wondering about that kind of stuff while Kirino continued on, without me even asking.

“They really are cute you know! In the usual bishoujo games, the player normally is a male, so they get called many different ways. They address you in a special way, like ‘onii-chan’ ‘onii’ ‘aniki’ ‘anikun’ some different way that suits the girl’s type. That love they have for the brother just really strikes you hard.”

“I see… that’s surprising…”

I follow along not too seriously. Heh, she really loves it …

By the way, you keep addressing me like “Hey” or “Yo ” and other rude ways. What’s your opinion on that? It doesn’t seem right to me at all. Rather, it frustrates me all the time.

“Oh, of them, I like this girl the best!”

My sister was pointing at a blushing short frail type girl with black hair in a twin-tail hair style.

"Black hair has got to be in a twin tail, I think. These little weak-looking girls make you feel like you want to protect them and you know… hug them tight and… haha aren't they nice?"

You have brown hair. You have a super short skirt and sit in such a way that shows your legs all the time and laugh loudly on the phone. Doesn't that comment you made absolutely deny yourself?

Well… putting that aside.

"I… see."

My sister likes 'little sisters'… and that is why she is into collecting these kind of items.

That I understand now, but that doesn't mean my questions are answered. Rather, it makes it even stranger for me.

I asked with a serious face.

"B-But, why's that?"

"Huh?"

"Like, why do you like sisters? I'm not saying that it's bad or anything, but the games you collect… Normally men would be buying them, right? And they are… Err… Even ones that aren't supposed to be sold to under-18 year olds. It just absolutely doesn't fit your image. Why did you… What's the reason you began to like those kinds of things? What made you like it? Is there something behind it?"

"That is… well…"

Kirino was apparently shaken from my question. She blinked her eyes like she had been splashed with a bucket of cold water. Her eyes are wandering everywhere. She's hesitating to answer the difficult question… It didn't seem like that was the thing. I kept waiting for a while and…

"I.. I don't know…"

She said in a somewhat childish way, with her eyes closed tight, and her face all red.

I respond, "Huh?" and ask again. My sister now has her hands in front of her chest and starts blushing.

"You see… Umm I-I don't know… myself…"

Oh wow, is she being possessed by some evil spirit all of the sudden?

Where's her usual annoying personality?

How she looked when embarrassed totally wasn't like her, (I mean she was so cute) so I was unsure of what to do.

"You don't know? But… it's about yourself you know …"

"Because… I-It just turned out this way! I don't really know why… Just when I realized, I was already in love with it…"

You're really talking like some other character… It's totally not you.

"…I think it all began with an anime I saw in the store. "

Kirino's attitude is now that of a weak little sister character, just like the ones she loves.

She looks up at me with a worried look.

"I know too that this isn't… a normal girl's hobby. That's why I couldn't tell anyone… and I hid it… But even if I know so… I just love it… When I'm using the internet… I just can't help googling about it… and then I find myself playing the trial version… and as I play the trial edition, I get the feeling that I've got to buy it and… "

So this is the result of that.

I look at the tower of little sister type games and thin my eyes.

…Aren't you completely falling for the game companies' sales tactics?

"Th-These cute cover illustrations make me go crazy!"

Don't blame the illustrator…

Erm… So why am I listening to how my sister became an otaku in the middle of the night?

I'm pretty sure there's no other brother in the world who has the same experience as me.

Kirino continues on.

"I thought it was wrong… So I thought of quitting… many times. But I just couldn't quit. Because… you know when you open your browser, the news sites registered to Hatena Antenna gives me new information every day, and tries to make me buy lots of stuff… Damn those CarsSP and AkibaBlog…"

"Well… you know… what were they… news sites? You could just stop looking at them, right?"

"If I could manage to do that, then I wouldn't have to go through all this trouble."

A little question was enough to get her quite depressed.

Hey… Who the heck is this? I don't remember having such a cute sister.

Kirino sitting flat in front of me and looking up at me with eyes glittering with tears.

"So… What do you think I should do?"

"…"

What should she do, she asks me…

Like hell, I'd know… That would be my honest reply. But I certainly can't tell that to my sister who is depending on me, regardless of what her intentions might be.

I do understand. The reason why she chose me as the consultant. It's not because I'm a reliable, lovable brother. It's because I mean nothing to her and she assumes there would be nothing bad in telling me about it.

It's such a damned story, having not a bit of respect for me.

But still, whatever her reasons were, she still told me what her worries were. She might not have any love for me, but she still does have at least a speck of trust in me and relied on me, right? And now, the only person who could help her, is me, right? Then, case closed. No other choice.

Just about when my mind was made up, Kirino said something outrageous.

"Should I… talk to mother and father about this?"

"Absolutely not! Don't even try! If you could have done that, you wouldn't have to worry about all this in the first place!"

Whoa that surprised me. Maybe she's actually quite the airhead.

"Oh right. Then I won't."

"Yeah, keep it to yourself. And make sure father doesn't find out."

Our father is one of those old style grumpy men and is very strict.

If father does find out about this 'secret hobby' of hers … All hell would break loose.

"If they find out… Would I get in trouble?"

"You most likely would. Honestly, I don't want things to end up like that. So that's why I will help so that your hobby doesn't get revealed… Not that I know exactly what to do…"

"Are you okay with that?"

Kirino looked like she didn't accept that. It seems unbelievable that I offered to help her.

So… What kind of impression does she have about me ? I won't ask, since I dread the consequences of doing so.

Though I wasn't exactly pleased, I still nodded.

"Sure. If anything happens, just tell me. I might not be able to give you good advice, but I will do what I can."

I will later come to regret saying that without giving it much thought.

"O-Oh… All right then. That might be of help to me… "

Kirino didn't thank me, but she did make a number of small nods and looked happy.

Seeing my sister like that doesn't make me feel bad, honestly.

So she can make faces like this too.

I watch her smiling face with a strange feeling in my heart.

It brings back the old days… I don't know why, but I thought so.

Well anyhow, I guess things will somehow work out. After I found that game of hers, she had been thinking hard and worrying about this for the past two days, and decided to talk to me.

There was not an option of refusing to help. Though I admit it's troublesome.

…Oh well, I'm relieved that it wasn't the 'worst nightmare come true'.

"By the way, you only like 'little sisters' and buy ' hentai games about little sisters,' right? You don't have any other intentions, right?"

"Huh? What else did you think it was?"

I only asked to seek further assurance, but Kirino seems puzzled.

And a few seconds later, she seems to have imagined my 'worst nightmare come true' scenario and made a frown.

"…Disgusting. Like hell no."

Ah, she's back to her normal self in a second. She's filled with hate. Now this is my sister.

Oh shit, I was supposed to feel annoyed about this, but yet I felt rather assured. This shows how strange her obedient attitude just now was… Heh?

"Disgusting you say…? In the games you love, little sisters love their brother's greatly, right? Why do you deny it yourself?"

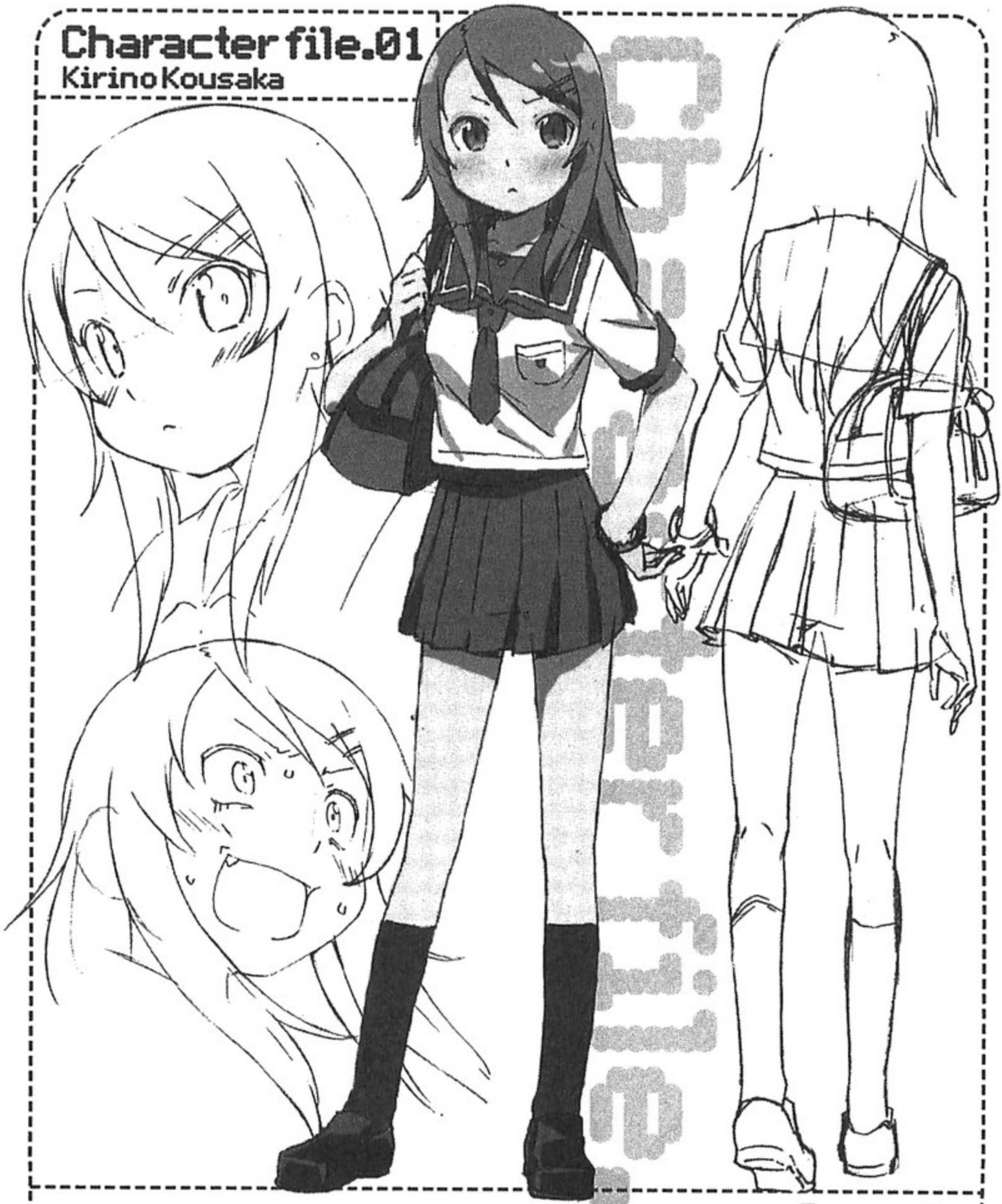
"…Oh what an idiot you are. Don't mix up 2D and 3D realms. Games are just games. Reality is reality. Think of this, would a real little sister ever think of liking their own brother? No way."

Did she just indirectly say that she 'absolutely hates' me? Isn't this cruel? I'm sure there are brothers and sisters who get along perfectly together in this world. That doesn't deny the fact that I am your eternal enemy.

"This business is finished, so can you get out now?"

Damn… She really isn't cute.

Character file.01
Kirino Kousaka



高坂桐乃【こうさか・きりの】

◆茶髪にピアスなイマドキの女子中学生。兄の京介に対しては、常に高圧的かつ侮蔑的な態度をとる。

◆性別:女
◆年齢:14歳
◆身長:165cm
◆体重:45Kg
◆3サイズ:82/54/81

01

Character file.02
Kyousuke Kousaka

高坂京介【こうさか・きょうすけ】

◆自称・ごく普通の男子高校生。何事にも無気力で、「普通」「無難」であることを好む。

◆性別:男
◆年齢:17歳
◆身長:175cm
◆体重:60Kg
◆3サイズ:———

02

第二章

Chapter 2

A week has passed since the night I stepped on the extra large mine. I had some years' worth of life counseling with my sister, but that doesn't mean our cold relationship has thawed.

We have not talked since then, as usual.

Well that's how the world goes round; Things don't change so quickly.

"I'll do all that I can," I've said. My sister hasn't asked for any help as of now. Besides, there's not much I can do for her. I don't have the motivation to plan and do anything either. All the questions and curiosity I had have drifted away by now. I guess it's fine this way.

I should just forget about my sister's strange hobby and continue living like I've been.

Only if things go as they are… This should hopefully …

Vaguely thinking about the issue, the chime signaling the end of class sounded and the classroom became noisy .

"Oh, who cares?"

I stretched in my seat to relax my muscles, tense from the boring classes.

Then, my bespectacled childhood friend walked up and stood before me; she bended down and peered into my face.

"You've been looking dull for some time now. Are you tired?"

"You know I'm always dull," I answered with self-loathing while making popping noises with my neck.

Slouching lazily on a chair with half-open eyes, I make a great example for your 'typical dull high school student ' stereotype.

My bespectacled childhood friend smiled slightly.

"That's for sure. But you see I'm comparing you with the 'usual Kyou-chan.'"

"Well, if YOU say so, then I really must be."

"Oh, you're so unmotivated!"

"That's normal for me too. Shall we head home?"

"Yes!"

I picked up my bag and got up. Together with my bespectacled childhood friend, we headed out to the corridor.

Tamura Manami. My relationship with her, I should say, is that of a childhood friend who's been unable to terminate the relationship. Recently, she's also become some kind of a pseudo-tutor for me.

Aside from the fact that she wears glasses, she's quite smart.

Her looks are average. Her face is quite cute, but she happens to just be too plain.

'She becomes a beauty when she takes her glasses off …' Unfortunately that doesn't happen with her either.

She still has a normal plain face without her glasses.

Her grades are at the bottom of the top tier. She's not part of any clubs and her hobbies are cooking and

sewing. She's a nice person and has quite a few friends, although that number dips when it comes to friends that she could go out with after school.

A side character; rather, no one deserves titles like ' normal', 'usual' and 'average' more than her. She's a woman who seems to be the polar opposite of Kirino.

It's not only her looks, either.

"What's the matter? Why are you staring at my face?"

"Nothing, I was just thinking that you're completely normal."

"Oh wow, you're making me blush."

"It's not a compliment you know…"

I stand corrected. She isn't just normal but also an airhead.

"But being normal is good, right?"

She's the airheaded normal girl who says things like that.

"Well, yeah" was my response to that bespectacled girl .

All hail average! Viva, normal life!

Since that's my motto, my long time relationship with Manami, who is the quintessential normal girl, was a cozy one. I feel relieved when I'm with her. In that sense, she's the opposite of my sister.

We walked down the corridor, side by side.

"So, what happened?"

"Oh? What do you mean?"

"Like I said before, I'd love it if you told me the reason why you've been so tired."

"Oh yeah, the reason why I've been all dull recently… "

She can sense anomalies from me more than I can myself. I didn't notice anything, but if she says so, then I must be spending days being tired. If that is so, there's only one reason for that.

"It has nothing to do with you, so don't worry about it, " I say lightly and sling my schoolbag behind my shoulder. But Manami isn't the kind of girl who's satisfied with such an answer.

She looks at me suspiciously.

"It does have something to do with me, very much so! "

"Huh? Why?"

"Oh, you're so mean like that. Then, pretend I was feeling all blue."

"Kyou-chan, would you just think 'It has nothing to do with me' and ignore me?"

With a querying expression, she smiled slightly – That was a very sly way of putting it.

I frowned and murmured, "You just can't leave others alone, can you?"

Manami parts her lips and chuckles. Why does she seem so happy? I sigh and make an 'I-give-up' face.

"You are so much more like my mom than my real mom."

"Oh? You mean you love me that much?"

"I mean you're like an old maid."

"Auu…"

Wham. Stricken by my words, Manami stands still as if her bag held with both hands has become tens of times heavier.

I am walking a step ahead so I look back and I see tears welling up in her eyes.

"That was mean…"

I see, so it seems it did affect her quite a bit. I felt somewhat guilty, so I thought I should answer Manami's first question as much as I could. I warned her first that I couldn't tell her in detail and spoke of my sister's name. It came as a shock for Manami; she shook her head.

"Your little sister?"

I nodded while still looking straight ahead.

"What's the matter with your sister?"

"Err… Well… You see, she asked me for counseling about life… I guess?"

I spoke ambiguously while Manami blinked in surprise.

"Asking for life counseling? From you?"

"What's that look for? Is it so unexpected?"

Don't give me the look that says 'Failure in human resources department.'

Manami seemed to have noticed my stare and quickly raised both hands in denial.

"Err… Well I don't think she did a 'reckless thing.' I absolutely don't!"

"You're terrible at lying."

I snatched her glasses off with a smile. I jokingly put them on; the world suddenly became distorted.

"G-Give me my glasses back!"

"Glasses, my glasses!"

This plain girl is now acting like she's in a manga, so I play along for a while before suddenly getting back to the topic.

"Though she said it was counseling, it was just some circumstances that made me listen to her talk."

"Oh! Oh!"

Manami desperately put her glasses on, which I have returned at this point.

I walked on and Manami caught up in a huff. After checking that she was beside me, I continued with the topic.

"… She seems to be deeply troubled about it, but I can't do anything about it so I have to leave her alone."

"I see…"

The talking was over and we walked down the corridor in silence.

During that time, Manami had her index finger on her lips while looking upwards but…

Suddenly, she let out a loose chuckle.

"Kyou-chan is so kind."

"… What made you think that way?! Get your face away from me, four-eyes!"

I said it meanly and looked to the side. I admit I'm not good at hiding my embarrassment. I'm so childish.

"You don't seem to be able to do anything, yet you still want to do something for her, right?"

"Heh! No way."

I slackened my shoulders and released a deep breath. But Manami had a smile that seemed almost sure to say, ' Oh, I know your real intentions, Kyou-chan.'

Heh, how annoying. This is why childhood friends are …

I didn't give a response so we stopped talking for the time being.

We changed our shoes at the entrance hall and left the school building. It's roughly a kilometer walk up to my home.

Manami lives close by in the same neighborhood, so she comes along up till my home.

After passing the school gates, Manami broke the ice.

"By the way, are your studies going well?"

"Not at all!"

"That bad, huh? Let me help you in your studies today ."

"That would be great help. It seems I just can't get myself to study when I'm alone."

"You start reading comic books, right?"

"Do you have X-ray vision or something?"

She saw right through me, apparently, and was even smiling.

Studying for entrance examinations… It's the normal topic between high school students.

By the way, the university I want to enter is the local university, just like Manami.

Some might think the reason is a bit girlish, but the decision was made because I wanted to go to the same university as her. It's not that I'm in love with her or anything, it's that I want this comfortable ' have-been-together-forever relationship' to continue for as long as possible. And if I'm right beside Miss Average – Manami, I might be able to have the normal life that I yearn for. That was what I thought.

"My guide for life," Manami says.

"Okay. Let's meet up at my house to go to the library. Oh, a new flavour is out so would you want to try it too? "

"Really? Thanks."

Manami's family runs a Japanese sweets shop so she gives me samples often.

I always poke fun of her for acting like some elderly, but I do think the sweets at her place aren't bad. It might be because I had been treated Rakugan and Manjuu from young.

It's what they call a 'childhood friend's delicacy', unlike the usual 'mom's delicacy.'

"Sure. I don't think I can help your sister's life counseling, so I'll be nice to Kyou-chan instead."

"You're just too good a person."

Manami smiled at my sarcastic comment. She nodded with a happy face and started swinging her bag in front of her skirt. This is a signal that only works between childhood friends. It's the equivalent of a puppy wagging its tail. It means 'praise me more.'

"You will be a good granny. Your grandchildren will surely be blessed."

"Err… That praise… Don't you normally say 'You'll surely be a good wife and that whoever becomes your husband is lucky.'?"

"No, I did say granny precisely, since every time I talk with you I get the same feeling as I had when I was talking to my late grandmother on the terrace over a cup of tea."

"You aren't praising me are you? That surely wasn't a praise! Heh, sure. I'm not sexy. Oh, Kyou-chan. You have this 'side character' face anyways!"

"You're the last person I would have expected to hear that from."

I didn't know we thought of each other in the same way like this. I guess we are quite alike after all.

While we were talking like that, we arrived near my house.

If I turned left at the next corner, I'd have reached home.

But at the right, or more accurately the wrong timing, we encountered Kirino on her way back from school.

"Uh oh."

I paused before getting to the corner.

From the right side of the corner, the great Teen Magazine model was walking along in her school outfit. It seemed like she was together with her schoolmates. All the girls talking with my sister are good looking. They're all unique and have their respective charms.

Well, you know that famous idol group formed with a bunch of younger teen girls? Imagine them in school uniforms walking down the street talking loudly.

"…"

We went silent and stopped in our tracks.

Before us, the side-characters, the middle school students passed by showering the area with a glittering aura.

"Heh…"

Manami watched as the cutting edge girls walked on with a look of admiration.

"Those were really cute girls. It must be nice to be young."

"Granny, remember you are a high school girl. You've been forgetting too many things recently."

I can't help her any more. She speaks like an old lady. Nothing can help her.

"I know, Grandpa. But even when I was in middle school, I wasn't proud like them. Middle school students, they're still kids… Yet they are much more mature than me. Oh, how I envy them… Maybe I should work a little harder."

"… You're fine… You're all right the way you are now …"

If you become like Kirino, then there'll be no sanctuary left for me anymore.

I'd rather be beside a normal and plain childhood friend than a shiny, cutting edge girl.

Heh, both me and Manami are in a different realm from them.

I understand. God damn it.

A few days later, I had the opportunity to talk to my sister again.

Sunday. I was heading to the library in the morning together with Manami. After I sent Manami home in the evening, Kirino had been waiting for me at the entrance hall in my home.

She was leaning against the wall and crossing her arms . Her evil glare hurt my heart.

Err… did I do something bad to her?

"… Come for a minute."

"Wh-Why?"

I asked, concealing my fear. Kirino kept up her glare.

"Life counseling, the continuation."

She cut up the words and muttered.

I understand what you want to say, but why are you filled with hatred?

Is that how your attitude should be when you're consulting someone?

"But you know…"

"Just come now… quickly."

Kirino pulled my sleeve even before I finished taking my shoes off. What annoyed me was how she remembered to not make the error of taking my hand directly.

"Jeez. You leave me with no choice, do you?"

I'm so nice that I couldn't resist in this tense situation and humbly walked up the stairs.

Thus, I was forced into my sister's room.

It smelled sweet as usual. By the way, Manami's room smells of incense, just like a Granny's room. I guess it really depends on the person.

Kirino, who went in the room before me, had pulled out the PC chair and beckoned me over with her index finger.

What's with her? Didn't she want life counseling?

I was troubled, as I couldn't understand my sister's intentions.

"Here, sit."

"Uh huh…"

I followed her orders obediently. Kirino stood right by me and leaned on her arm that was resting on the desk.

Kirino switched the PC on and the boot up screen changed to the desktop.

The wallpaper was a number of nekomimi girls relaxing in a living room.

In the corner of the cute desktop was an icon with a SD cat peeking up from a trash can. The top left corner had a

calendar, while the top had a nekomimi styled window open with icons for messengers and web browsers lined up neatly.

"It's really… customized."

"Kind of. I dressed it up by changing the skin and used a launcher. Isn't this just the basics?"

Kirino smiled smugly.

(Human) Skin? (Missile) Launcher to dress up…? What the heck? Why does she have to use such techie words? I don't understand a thing, but I guess she is customizing it to her tastes.

… So I guess otakus and middle school girls are the same when it comes to wanting to show off like this.

"And? What do you want to do by showing this to me ?"

"Oh you're so dumb. You still don't get it?"

Kirino gave me a reproachful look.

Like I would!

She held the PC mouse and said,

"… The game, you know? We're going to play it together now."

"Huh? The game…? You mean me and you? Together? "

"Y-Yes…"

She answered, avoiding my gaze. She seemed to understand that she was requesting something crazy from me and was hesitant to mention it.

I don't understand at all.

Why must I play a game side by side with my sister, whom I'm not even on good terms with? Even if it's a versus game, it still wouldn't be fun.

Kirino seemed to notice my doubtful expression, and tried to alleviate the situation.

"You said so yourself, that you would do anything to help me, or something…"

"Well I did tell you I'd help you so that it won't get revealed to our parents. But I was told it was some counseling on life. Why are we suddenly going to play a game?"

"I-It's necessary! Just hold this!"

"H-Hey!"

She forced me to hold the mouse. Normally she would hate to even come in contact with me, but this time she covered my hand with hers and started moving the mouse. She double clicked an icon in the corner.

She started getting excited suddenly.

Where was her usual cool attitude? I would assume this is her usual self since she seemed much livelier. I seemed to understand recently that she has been acting cute to fit in with the surroundings.

Cool, laid-back, awkward, overly resisting…

Wearing the most fashionable clothes, talking with the vogue, going to karaoke with her friends and stuff like that…

Is that the “I win” stereotypical model for middle school kids nowadays?

I don’t think I have a say over whether that’s good or bad.

But you know Kirino, wouldn’t you rather play games together with your friends?

“… What are you looking at? You’re getting annoying.”

“Nothing.”

Oh well, I guess I’ll just have to carry this on with her.

I went into a ‘big brother mode’ and looked at the screen, which was showing the game.

Ring! Some fancy title screen greets me with a girl’s loli voice.

"Sister Makers X Volume 4!"

"Welcome back, big brother! Let's make love with… your little sister!"

"What are you trying to make me play?!"

I should be mad. I am supposed to be mad at that point. I should have known something was wrong when she got me to play on her computer in her room rather than on the living room's TV! This bitch! Where the heck do you find a brother who'd start playing a 'make love with sister' game together with his real sister? Am I a pervert? Huh?!

"I'm sure you know too but, big brother… All your little sisters in this game are over the age of 18."

Shut up, you should keep quiet for a while now.

I hold my aching head and look up at Kirino.

"Y-You know…"

"Why are you shouting out loud all of a sudden? You surprised me! H-Hey, don't get your face near me!"

She fired poisonous knives of words at me while I glared at her. I thought I should say something to her but right then, I noticed my sister's face going sour fast so I held it back.

"… Hey what's wrong?"

"… You're looking down at me in the end."

"Huh? What?"

"You just make empty promises. You're biased even before you begin playing it! You might say nice things, but in your mind you're just thinking I'm some strange girl…"

She stares at me with hatred.

"Y-You know… it's not like that but…"

I scratched my head furiously with my free hand.

"It's not a matter of looking down at you or anything! It's wrong for me to play this in front of you! Get a grip! It's not the same as us watching some soap opera in the living room and they air a kissing scene!"

"What are you talking about? I don't understand at all."

Does she really not understand? Am I saying something weird? Well, I pointed at the screen and said,

"I don't really know much but I assume this is a game where you get closer to a virtual little sister and so on. It's made for men and given an M18 rating, which naturally means that there will be that kind of scene in the climax…"

As I spoke, Kirino fidgeted still retaining her angry face.

"Don't you have anything against watching that kind of scene together with your brother?"

"!!!"

Kirino was as red as a beet with her jaws on the floor; her face had an expression of 'I didn't realize until you told me.'

"I-I didn't really care too much about that… Don't say such nonsense! The way you say it makes me look weird!"

"Mmm…"

I seem to understand the problem. She probably doesn't play this game because of its M18 rating or because it had 'those scenes.' Her definition of 'loving her sister' doesn't include erotic deeds. Well, she's quite obviously a girl so…

Anyway… I wiped my forehead with the back of my hand.

"Okay. I understand, Kirino. I kind of know what the situation is like now. So let's discuss, okay? Uh…"

"Click gently on the left of the screen (heart)!"

"I told you to shut up! Don't interrupt me at the best moment while I'm talking!"

I talked back at the screen. How confused am I…

All right, I just have to calm down…

"Hey… Don't be mean to Shiori-chan!"

"You there, get back to this world. That's just a picture."

"Don't call her a picture!"

My mistake. That wasn't a well-prepared comment, but still… What a face you have to make to shout at me.

Oh well. All right… What should I do? Someone tell me! This is beyond my capabilities.

Using the last remnants of my soul, I tried to convince my sister.

"I'm sorry I said something without even knowing about it. I don't have any intent to look down on what you're doing or make a fool out of you. I will promise that's true. Believe in me."

"…"

Kirino looked at me with pursed lips and tears in her eyes.

"But you see, umm, this game is a bit too high level for me. You know, I'm still 17. I don't have any intention to look down on you, but you see… It's just impossible. I understand. It must be extremely fun. That's why you're recommending this to me, right? I get it. I understand,

really. Even still, let me decline your offer. Okay, if it's me alone, there might be the slightest possibility, but I don't have the courage to play a M18 game right next to my little sister."

"… Weenie!"

My sister gives me such humiliating names.

Endure it, Kyousuke! If you get mad here, then things will get even more complicated!

"Heh…"

She breathed a huge sigh. I'm the one who felt like sighing.

Kirino put it simply,

"Then this is homework."

"H-Homework?!"

"Yes. You don't want to play it beside me, right? That's why it's homework. I'll lend it to you along with a laptop so complete it entirely by next week."

"…"

If I said no there, she'd surely say something like, "I'm making a fool of her or I'm looking down at it."

Although my face was twitching I was unable to revolt against my sister's tyranny.

"All right then. I just got to do it, right? I'll just…"

"That's right."

Kirino swerved her mouse proudly, and closed the application. The girl in the title screen (1:1 SD character) came up again and made a bow. She was waving her hands vigorously against the player's departure.

"Brobro, (heart) please play with me again, surely, bye bye!"

"Yeah yeah, bye…"

You're such a good girl.

My sister never called me like that, ever.

In the evening the next day, I went down to the living room looking for a cold drink where I met Kirino.

She was in an extra short skirted school uniform as usual. She had her legs crossed on top of the sofa, just like some queen. She had her usual unapproachable aura .

This is exactly what a princess is like. Even if she is my sister, a commoner like me can't easily kick off a conversation with her.

Well, not like that was a problem or anything. It was only until recently that we've had the occasion to converse but I'd just reaffirmed that we still haven't gotten any closer.

"…"

While eyeing Kirino from afar, I gulped down cold tea. Phew! I relaxed a little before starting to leave the living room. Just as I put my hand on the door knob, she called out.

"Hey-"

"Uh… Wh-what?"

I looked behind awkwardly like a rusty robot.

Kirino asked with short phrases while still having her eyes on the magazine.

"Done it?"

"… Err… What do you mean?"

I tried feigning ignorance of her intents. Kirino threw aside her magazine and looked at me with eyes like some popular idol would to a lower class art director, and whispered.

"So you haven't done it?"

"Well… Uh…"

H-How did you know?

Oh, so scary Kirino-san. You're really scary. Please let me go…

I was forced into a corner while Kirino pressured me.

"Why not? I said it was homework. Why haven't you done it yet?"

Why? Why am I being scolded by my sister for not playing a hentai game she lent me? What the heck is wrong with my life? Rather, there's no way I'm going to play it! What would make me want to play a M18 hentai little sister game while I have a real sister? Think of my psychological difficulties!

Doesn't anyone understand me?

"Err… Well you see… I'm a beginner so… I don't really understand how to play it, even after looking at the manual."

I was half crying and made up a stupid excuse.

Kirino continued with her half angry tone,

"Then just say so."

She's just like some TV star who unleashes her double personality behind the screens.

"Heh… I'll just guide you along with the introduction part, so come to my room."

My sister took me by my sleeve and dragged me away. Out of the living room, while going up the stairs, I tried to say something to resist.

"I-I said yesterday I didn't want to play it right next to you…"

"Yeah, yeah. You're such a cry baby. Just come with me, will you?"

Damn it. Why do I have to be told all this? Shouldn't I be the one to tell her that?

Now at the top of the stairs, I was shoved into my sister's room like before.

Kirino recovered her PC from standby and told me.

"Since you're just so helpless, I'll get you the general rated version."

"If you had such a thing, then give it to me in the first place!"

"You don't understand at all. Although the general rated and the M18 versions share the same title, they're completely different games."

Someone praise me. I am a great person for actually going along with this conversation, right?

"But… Didn't they just edit out all the hentai scenes in the general rated version?"

"That's an insult to the people who write the text and the fans if you say that. Don't ever say that. If a game I played in the M18 version gets a general rated version for something like a console release, I will play that version too. But I always get the feeling that something's different. What exactly is different is hard to determine since I'm not a professional. Even then I think there are things they can only do if it's M18."

"I see."

I don't get any of it at all.

"It's not just the matter of adding a heroine and character voices."

Like telling me that would help?

"Well I told you a lot, but to sum up what I have to say , the general rated version isn't bad but I'd rather you

just play the original if you could. That's why I gave you the original version as homework."

"… Then why are you preparing the general rated version now?"

"Like I said! You're the one who said you don't know how to play it. Be thankful that I'm going to teach you how!"

I'm not thankful at all!

Damn it… I'll have to do this after all…

I grabbed the mouse and faced the screen which was already displaying the game.

With that loli voice that sent shivers down my spine, the "Let's Love Your Sister" title came up.

Below the title, the text "Click on the screen gently (heart)" was flashing.

Kirino who suddenly became talkative was giving me orders from my side.

"OK let's begin. Now put in your name… Hey why are you trying to start with the default name? Put in your real name!"

"My real… name…? What's with that? Do I have to put it in?"

"What? Of course you do! The most important thing in this game is that your sisters call you by your real name! Now hurry up!"

"Damn, I have to do it, huh? Whatever."

I've given up. My very first little sister game, playing with my real name… How high level is this…

It might be the right time to give an introduction to the basics of "Let's Love Your Sister (General rated edition)" here. Of course, I can't say much since I only just begun.

Please accept that it will only be a brief introduction.

Ahem… The player of this game, which is me, has to left click the text in the box in the lower side of the screen to scroll through. According to Kirino…

"Well this is just a traditional AVG game. You won't need a manual."

From my glancing through the manual (which she took away just now), this in-game screen has three components: a text window, a background picture, and the character's image.

However, during a special event scene, something called an event CG which fills the entire screen comes up in place of the background picture and the character image to make the game play exciting.

A fair comment to this would be that it's an extremely high quality picture-card show.

It's a simple system and the game play seems to be easy too.

Hmmm. Maybe I'll be able to do it after all.

After typing in my name, I started the game. With a blue sky as the background, the main character's monologue began.

"My name is Kousaka Kyousuke. It's strange to say it myself, but I'm a normal high school student."

… What a boring guy! Calling yourself normal suddenly? Hey… (dry laugh)

I didn't give you my name for nothing. Say something better will you?

It seemed like Kirino understood my negative feelings towards him and gave an explanation at the right timing.

"You see in these games, the main character is often set as a normal average character so that the player is able empathize with him. Oh, at the beginning he is set a bit dumb so that he still has room for improvement in the game."

"I see."

… She wasn't talking about me, yet why is it that my own heart aches? Since he had the same name as me, I just kept associating him with myself.

Okay, I'll take back my comment about calling you boring. Pleased to meet you, Kyousuke.

But anyhow, Kirino becomes talkative suddenly when the topic is about this stuff.

While listening to Kirino explaining along happily, I clicked and clicked and clicked… The generic monologue finished and the screen turned black. The sound effects of birds chirping started playing.

Kyousuke: Oh I slept well. Since I studied until so late yesterday, I couldn't help it.

Although I felt his lines were a bit too informative, I'll leave that aside.

I don't feel like listing down all the text in the game, so I'll cut to the chase and get to explaining.

This game begins with the main character, Kyousuke, waking up in his room only to find his sister, Shiori, sleeping together in his bed.

Kyousuke: Oh, Shi-Shiori…?

I woke up hastily and I blinked rapidly.

Kyousuke: Oh, you surprised me! Jeez Shiori, when did you…

Huh? His reaction is so lame!

Feel some danger for yourself. Are you half asleep?! You wake up in the morning and you find that you were sleeping with your sister. You should be shouting aloud there! By the way, this Shiori is some black haired, twin tailed, timid looking loli.

It's the character that Kirino claimed as her favorite. At that point, she had her hair untied.

"Hey… What do you feel after seeing her sleeping so helplessly? Didn't it surprise you?"

"Err… How should I put it? It's normal?"

I make an ambiguous remark to Kirino, who was praising the event CG.

I tried clicking to scroll on further to which a new window came up in the center of the screen.

"Oh, wow."

"That's the route branching choice. At crucial parts of the scenario, you have to choose the main character's actions. According to your choices, the sister's impression towards you can get better or worse, or even more, the story might change afterwards."

"Oh? Which one should I choose? There's like three of them."

"Huh? You have to decide of course. It's a game you know. It'll be all right. The choices in this game are really easy."

Kirino said lightly.

I guess it is so.

I am going to choose the main character's actions. So err… Let me see…

Seeing Shiori sleep calmly I…

1. Embrace her tightly, but gently.

"Denied"

Are you suicidal?! How crazy would you have to be to embrace your sleeping sister?!

2. Get out of bed quietly so I won't wake her up.

"Hmm…"

This is the safe option. But you know Kyousuke, if you don't set things straight now, you'll be taken for granted by your sister later. It's too late for my own sister, but I won't let you make the same mistake. So I declined this one too and clicked on the third choice without hesitation .

3. Kick her out of the bed without question.

Slam (a special effect with the screen shaking)

Kyousuke: Don't just sneak into someone's bed! Wake up you brat!

All right! A very correct action. That's how a brother should be. This isn't a bad game after all. And next is…

"What are you doing to Shiori-chan?!"

BAM I got a counterattack from my real life sister. I was kicked away without question and I fell over along with the chair.

"Ouch! Why'd you do that suddenly?!"

I exclaimed as soon as I got up but Kirino shouted at me with a horrified face.

"That would be my question! How could you make the first choice as "Kick her out of the bed without question?" I can't believe it! What is wrong with your brain?!"

"Err well… I thought first… I shouldn't get taken lightly by her so…"

"Did you say something just now?"

"Nothing!"

I'm so weak! …Jeez the sister here is so strong. I'm completely unable to counterattack.

If you grow up evil then there's no cure.

I held my side that got kicked and lamented to myself.

I sat myself back on the chair, grabbed the mouse and continued with the game. I clicked to scroll through Kyousuke's lines and the BGM suddenly changed to a depressing and sad tune.

Shiori: I-I'm sorry… Kyousuke-oniichan… *sob* I-I… couldn't sleep by myself yesterday and……

Kyousuke: What? You said something?

Shiori: Uuu… N-Nothing! Ahaha! Good morning, brother!

Shiori was holding onto her sides, that got kicked by me, and still admirably made a smile.

"This guy is a jerk, this main character…"

"That's the result of your choice! Rather I never knew there was such a scenario! I've never made such a choice so I didn't know… Oh how pitiful… Shiori-chan…"

Kirino pities the heroine who was being treated horribly from the start of the game.

But you know… You said almost exactly the same words to me…

I was smart enough not to voice that and admirably continued on with the game.

Already the mood is tense in the beginning of the game, in the morning of the Kousaka family. The main character Kyousuke has become a tyrant due to the branch choice. After throwing Shiori out of the room, he

changed into his school uniform and heads down for breakfast.

There were six loving sisters waiting there…

"Hey Kirino, these girls look way too unalike. You can obviously see they aren't related."

"Oh shut up. A different person drew each heroine."

I asked an insensitive question, but I thought that answer was worse. Oh well, I should just refrain from asking unnecessary questions.

I continued clicking.

A breakfast event starts with all the heroines lined up.

Ring

The screen changed into a bird's eye view of the dining table. Icons of every sister's faces were around the table, blinking and contracting. The top of the screen displayed, "Who do you want to talk to?"

"Huh? The screen changed again."

"That's an event choice screen. If you click on the icon for the sister you want to talk with, a conversation with that sister begins. There will be choices in the event too and depending on your choice, her prepossession for you changes in value."

"Hmmm… By the way, what do you mean by that prepossession value?"

"It's a numeric value of how much the sister loves her brother. If it isn't above a threshold, some events are locked. Of course, the individual endings depend on this too. So as a basic rule of thumb, you should watch many events for the sister you want to finish with and increase her prepossession value. By the way, if you increase the value for a few different sisters at the same time, special events will happen during times like Valentine's Day and so on. You should keep that in mind too."

She was way too enthusiastic explaining this stuff. Blabbering along non-stop… Is it so much fun?

"I-I see… by the way, let me ask what your prepossession value for me is."

"You sure you want to ask that?"

"Er… No thanks."

That expression was enough for me. I also figured that many special events that only show up if the prepossession value is below a certain threshold I've seen already.

"So this is the basic flow. You got it?"

"Sure!"

After finishing tutoring me, Kirino explained how to handle saving data, and closed the application. Then she looked into my face seemingly to ask something.

"Your thoughts of it?"

"I can't say anything yet… Since I only just started…"

"O-Oh right. Yes…"

Frankly, I don't think this game is for me. It's not a matter of it being interesting or not. It's too cruel for someone to play a game in which you love a virtual sister , when you actually have a sister in real life. Even if this

Shiori girl has a cute face and says some cute things and seems to love me, I just can't help myself imagining that she has an ulterior motive.

How should I put this… a distrust for little sisters? Well, imagine that Kirino was playing a game where she was to make love to a big brother. Do you think she can enjoy it with open arms? Of course not. That's how it is for me.

But, I said I'll play it so I'll finish only this one.

While I was pondering about these things…

"So which one would be best for next…"

Kirino happily opened a folder and wandered her mouse pointer around.

Is she trying to make me play sister games one after another?

"…"

I was too afraid to ask, that's for sure. That was just unacceptable. Why must I do so much for her?

Still, I kind of understand the reason why Kirino wants to make me play little sister games.

"Hey… Kirino-"

"What? Why do you have that serious look?"

"Do you have friends at school… Whom you can talk to and play games together with?"

Being asked that, Kirino first held a blank expression then looked down.

"… That's none of your business."

"Okay."

I recalled the scene where Kirino was walking along with her classmates. Those kids won't watch children's anime or play little sister games.

Rather, they would have the same characteristics as what I imagined my sister to be until recently. If I were in Kirino's shoes, I wouldn't dare trying to reveal my hobby to my classmates and finding a comrade.

"Then… forget about school. Do you have friends with the same hobby who you can freely talk about games and anime?"

Kirino didn't nod her head to the second question either.

"… I said that's none of your business."

"I see…"

I see. That's why she's recommending me the same hobby. It's because she wants to talk about it together. It' s because it's lonely for her to hide the hobby to others and only enjoy it for herself.

Yesterday, when she pulled me into this room, she said it was the continuation of life counseling.

I thought she just came up with a reason but maybe it wasn't like that…

"What? Are you looking down at me?"

"It's not like that."

It's not like that. I thought I wanted to do something about it for you. You're feeling lonely, right? But you don't want to admit it, do you? Of course not, you're stubborn.

Heh, I can't go on with your hobby forever either. If someone can be a sacrifice instead of me, that'll be the best. I'll feel so free.

"Kirino…"

I leaned back and looked up at the ceiling. If I was over 20, this would have been the moment I puffed some smoke from my cigarette.

"Let's make some friends."

"H-Huh?"

Kirino's eyes were wide open in surprise with an expression of "What is this idiot saying?"

That's okay. I looked at my sister with my usual, unmotivated face.

"You're the one that said it would be counseling about life. So at least listen to the advice I have to give."

Smile I make an evil smile and turned the chair around. Feeling like a counselor, I point at the bed without much thought.

“Now sit there.”

“…”

Kirino clammed up with a somewhat unhappy face but still obeyed to my order and moved.

Oh well. At least she seemed to listen to me.

“You said last time, ‘What should I do?’ Well, at that time I couldn’t give you any useful advice. So now, I’ll give you the answer. You should make friends.”

“Fri… ends…?”

“Yes. They can be ones who have similar hobbies like yours, so that you can talk freely about stuff like anime, games or M18 stuff. Of course they won’t look down on you or make a fool of you since they’re in the same position themselves.”

“So you mean… I should make Otaku friends?”

I nodded.

"…"

Kirino bit her lips, hugged her knees and gave it deep thought while sitting on the bed.

And then she muttered.

"I don't want… any otaku friends. If I'm going to be together with them, I'll be considered the same as them."

"That's some twisted logic there. You're a real otaku too."

"I-I'm not…"

"You aren't? Then what are you? Say something if you can."

I was, by then, quite annoyed by my sister's attitude so I said it in a way to corner her. Kirino looked down and went silent, her eyebrows quivering.

I clicked my tongue.

"It's you who is looking down on otaku and making haphazard remarks. Didn't I tell you? I won't look down on you regardless of what hobbies you have. What about you? Should you look down on those otaku with the same hobby as you who openly profess their interests?"

"…"

Kirino looked up sharply and glared with eyes filled with hatred, stabbing at me.

Shit… She's freaking scary! I was almost crying inside me but I fought to keep the serious expression on my face.

"That won't do. It's not logical. It's like looking down on yourself."

Oh I say such great things. It isn't me to be like this…

Kirino clicked her tongue loudly. So loud that all my tongue clicking seemed like nothing. I've been telling you that you're freaking me out.

"I'm not looking down at them! I'm just talking about the public image!"

"Public image?"

"Yes, public image. Yes, I like anime and hentai games, very much so. I should even admit I'm in love with them."

Err… You're in love with it… I really don't want to hear these lines coming out of a middle school girl's mouth. Kirino proudly said that aloud to me, who was stricken.

"Of course, I enjoy being with my friends at school too. But I love this side equally as much. I can't choose one or the other. What can I do? I love them both. I can't do anything about that."

Kirino was pretty smug about it.

"But I think I understand the fact that otaku are seen in bad light by the general public… Who do you think are the people that hates otaku the most?"

Middle school girls – because she is one herself, she understands it well.

"So… What I wanted to say was… They're both… Me!"

She seemed to be able to find the right words to express herself and seemed impatient.

It was really difficult to figure out what she wanted to say, but I think I can understand for the most part what my sister wanted to tell me.

She likes anime and is in love with hentai games. But she also loves being with her school friends so she is unable to choose one or the other. One half as middle school girl and another as an otaku, both make her whole . That's what she meant to say… probably.

"But because it's like that… The idea of having it revealed to the family aside, I would never want it to be revealed to my classmates. If that happens, I can't go to school."

Public image. I guess it's the same as grown men in society. I should say it's more important for the students. The exclusive nature of the group, called the classroom, its characteristics to attack all things alien… Any middle school or high school student should have experienced it. After all, I am one. I understand that very well.

Anybody would be concerned about their public image, of course.

Being caught between your hobby and your public image, you weren't able to consult anyone and struggled all by yourself.

Okay, I understand your problem Kirino.

"So, that means… as long as your classmates don't find out, you can make otaku friends, right?"

"Y-Yes… I guess…"

"Then it's solved. You just have to make otaku friends without having your classmates know about it."

It's just this simple. What I wanted to ask right then was Kirino's wishes. If she had the will to make friends, things should work out I think.

"How's that? You have any good solution?"

"Nope. Unfortunately, I have nothing in my mind at the moment."

"You're useless… Really…"

Kirino blurts out with a glare. Nice attitude, Kirino. Yeah. As you say, I'm useless. I'll admit it to myself.

"Well, just leave it to me."

"… Huh? Why are you so confident?"

Kirino glanced at me with a look of distrust, but I gave her a meaningful smile.

My little sister, did you know of this: there is a word called 'the granny's hidden stockpile of knowledge…'

"…Then how about she participate in one of those ' offline meetings'?"

My bespectacled childhood friend suggested to me so. After escaping from my sister's room, I dropped dead onto my bed and called Manami on the phone.

Of course, I can't reveal my sister's secret so I phrased it ambiguously like, "How to find friends that share the same hobby without having your classmates find out about it?"

"An offline meeting?"

"Yes, an offline meeting. Well you see… It's like a place where buddies from the internet meet up and have fun… I guess?"

"…"

So, I guess it's pronounced like offline meeting.

This granny reads these foreign loan words so strangely.

"No kidding. You know how to use this internet stuff?"

"Of course I can… Gee… Kyou-chan… Are you thinking I'm stupid or something?"

"Well… There's this impression that elderly people aren't too bright with machines…"

"I'm 17, a young and shining high school girl!"

Manami was desperate to convince me. Her adjectives were hilarious.

I can imagine her, almost in tears on the other side of the line.

"Seriously, Kyou-chan~! If you don't quit being like this, I'll get mad. *rage*"

Do people verbally say *rage*? Listening to her talk after having that combat-like conversation with Kirino really saved my heart.

"Well I'm sorry… But do you have a PC?"

"Oh? I-I do… Well… It's my brother's though…"

The last parts sounded subdued. I knew she wasn't so good at hiding things.

"Oh so you've only heard and seen it."

"Uu~ Yes… But I can still use that internet thing normally…"

"Yeah, right."

Your pronunciation is strange in the first place. I know you're old and have trouble with these new terms but still… I guess I shouldn't rely on her too much about this.

"Any experience participating in offline meetings? Oh I don't mean you, but your brother."

"It seems like he has. He said he went to an offline meeting for some community about RnB… Err Kyou-chan, do you know anything about 'Social Networking Services'?"

"Oh, what they call SNS nowadays. I've heard about it. It's membership based where you make profile pages about your hobbies and write up your diary to make friends and all, right?"

"Yes. There're famous ones like MiXi. The one my brother's in has no age restriction though. I guess this might be a good way to find friends with the same hobby outside of school."

"I see…"

Aha! I heard something good. I guess it's worth trying out right now.

"All right. Thanks for the insight, Manami."

"You're welcome. Haha… Then, see you tomorrow at the usual place~"

I hung up the phone and got up from bed. Putting my finger through the mobile strap, I swung my phone around before stowing it in my back pocket. After which I left my room. Of course, I'm headed for my sister's room.

I knocked on her door thrice. After a while, the door opened and she peeked out.

"Come in."

"All right."

I'm being invited into my sister's room… I noticed just now. It's my 4th time in my life to come into her room. Life's so unpredictable, like really…

"Sorry for the wait Kirino. I thought up of a way for you to make otaku friends."

I brought up the topic quickly, but for some unknown reason, Kirino clicks her tongue unhappily and snubbed me.

"Liar. You just pleaded to that Ms. Plain."

"Don't call her Ms. Plain! That word might be the best possible word to depict her, but I still hate to hear someone other than me bad mouthing her!"

"Why are you getting so mad? Are you dumb?"

Noticing Kirino staring at me with contempt, I toned down.

"Anyways… Don't say that or else I'll be hitting the next person who says it, even if that's you."

"Yeah, yeah…"

No need to say yes twice, brat. We're working for your sake. Watch your damned attitude. You're becoming unhappy already. When I left the room last time, you were fine.

Huh…? Could she…

"Let me ask this. Do you hate Manami?"

"Not really. Rather, I don't know much about her."

Of course. She's my childhood friend and not hers. She must have met her more than once, but there shouldn't

be much of a relation between Kirino and Manami. In the rare occasions where Manami comes close to my home, they might pass by. That's about it. Even last time when Kirino went past me and Manami, Manami didn't seem to recognize Kirino. If there's only so little of a relationship, there's no reason for Kirino to hate Manami.

Manami isn't the kind of person to be hated, so why?

"I don't like how she's… all over you."

Yeah, right… I don't get it at all. She isn't all over me at all.

Sparks were flying between us. At this rate, another cold war would start.

Heh, I'm the older one so I shall be the tolerant one. Oh, what a lovely brother I am.

"Now Kirino, it doesn't matter whose advice it is, right ? So just hear it out."

"All right then. So what is it?"

"Okay. By the way, do you know what SNS is?"

Repeating what Manami just told me, I suggested to her to participate in an offline meeting. Kirino had an uneasy look and kept silent.

"You don't like the idea…?"

"It's not like that but…"

She had her face down for a few seconds and continued thinking. She then looked up and said,

"…Okay. I'll do it."

Oh? You're obedient once in a while.

"It looks like you can access it from your cell phone too."

"Yeah I know, just don't get your face near me."

Kirino took her cell phone out of nowhere and started tapping her keypad with extreme speed.

…Amazing. This is impossible for me. Don't we see women like her, the ones that type SMS at crazy speeds?

I was thinking about that stuff, when Kirino clicked her tongue.

"Damn, I need an invitation to join… How cumbersome…"

"Don't you have friends at school? You can just text some of them and ask one of them to invite you into the SNS."

"You fool. You're a complete idiot. I can't put both my dark side and bright sides of myself together. You know, these things leave page view history."

"I-I see…"

Oh wow, she has two sides to her – a dark and bright side. Well I guess her bright side is the modern middle school girl who works as a teenage fashion magazine model, "Kousaka Kirino". Her dark side must be Kousaka Kirino, little sister loving anime loving, engaged with hentai games. This difference is just too big…

"Uh… if it's games and anime stuff, don't they have some special SNS for that? Why don't you search for one that requires no invitation?"

"Yeah, yeah…"

I gave her orders from her side and Kirino handled her cell phone unwillingly. She registered for some otaku-themed SNS. It seemed like she had to make her profile first.

"It's asking you to make your nickname. Hurry up and make one up."

"I can't just make one up so easily."

"You can just change it later, right? Just write something random for now. You might even copy the format other people are using. Like someone@ doingsomething…"

I peered into her cell phone's screen and tried hurry her. Kirino moved the phone away in an 'Oh you are so annoying' manner. She merely typed something in then showed it to me.

"So, how's this?"

"What is this 'Kiririn@ the_guy_sitting_beside_me_is_annoying (1)' written in the name box?"

"My nickname. Isn't it cute?"

It doesn't fit you at all. And do I have permission to be mad? Of course, right? Such treatment caused me to shed tears.

"H-Hey… you wrote 14 in your age section, but you wrote 'hentai games (little sister genre)' in your hobbies section… isn't that bad?"

"But I'm not lying. Who cares? This is my dark side. If my classmates or my model friends invited me, I won't write stuff like this in my profiles page."

Well, that's true. If I saw a female classmate's profile and find her passion about hentai games, I'd roll around on the floor laughing.

I'd surely be unable to talk normally with her the next day at school.

So using your two sides independently like you're doing now is the trouble-free way. That's fine.

But there's still something else that's been worrying me…

"Why do you have this troubled look for?"

"Because…"

Kirino did what I told her to do, but always with a worried face.

I decided I should hear her side of the story.

"Well… You see I'm a little afraid of socializing… You see, since the people with the same kind of hobbies are… mostly men… and they are much older than me. I'm not looking down at them or anything. I'm not hating them either… just… well… you see? I'm still… a little afraid."

"I see. Yes… that's right…"

I didn't think of that. Rather, that's a huge basic issue! … This isn't the same as socializing with classmates or friends at her modeling job. Forget about otaku and stuff,

being friends with older men might be… scary for middle school girls, even if it was just an internet-only relationship. If they were to meet in real life for offline meetings, it becomes even scarier. That means… she has to find friends within the same age group and gender as her…

… There's no way we'd find so many middle school girls with hobbies like her.

I scratched my head roughly. Oh, what should I do now…

"Well… let's search for women-only groups for that kind… even if the chances are slim."

"Yes, I'll try."

Kirino started using her cell phone to search for communities. I continue to interrupt her from beside.

"How about… this one?"

"Hmm? You mean this one?"

"… Yes. Oh wow, they do exist if you know where to look… Well, why don't you go look inside?"

What we found was a community called ‘All Together, Otaku Girls.’ It seems to be around 20 members in size. I don’t know if this number is small or large, but it’s about the same size as some real life hobby group. The community has entrance requirements, which is to send a message to the administrator of this group including the applicant’s age and gender. They can only join after her approval. Conveniently, they have a topic about ‘an invitation to a tea party.’ Since Kirino wasn’t a member yet, she couldn’t see the details. But still, it must be something like an offline party.

“Hey Kirino… Don’t you think this one would be all right?”

Even if they had men posing as girls hidden in the group, they won’t be able to participate in the offline meetings as they’ll undoubtedly be loathed. I thought this would meet all conditions, but my sister still had a complicated expression on her face.

“Uh huh… yes…”

“Now what? Is there still something worrying you?”

“It’s not like that but…”

"Then why don't you just write a message saying you want to join? There's the button."

"Yes…"

Kirino stared at the message editing screen then looked up to ask me,

"… What should I write for my message?"

"Well hmmm… I guess you should be honest with this kind of stuff. Just write that you want female friends with the same hobby."

Kirino nodded and started typing the message slowly before sending it out.

"Message Sent"

Watching that text displayed, I feel most of my duty is finally being fulfilled.

If Kirino can find female friends who understand her hobby, then my task is complete.

This might be the last time I come into this room. It was some abnormal chance that she chose me to counsel

her to begin with. I'm absolutely serious when I say I can 't go on with this anymore.

I thought this was the right way to go. Even if we were to revert to the dry relationship we had, I think that's inevitable. Well… I do think it's kind of lonely in a way. Yes… Just a little.

In the past few days, we did have decades' worth of talking.

During that time, I found out about my sister's unexpected side.

It wasn't just about her secret unexpected hobby. I saw my sister's real intentions which I thought I had given up on, thinking I would never understand them. I think I was able to touch her heart, which I never thought I'd see , even if it was just with a fingertip. It didn't really mean anything much, but still… I should be happy. I don't really know though…

"Okay, this should do it. I just have to wait for the response."

"I hope it goes well."

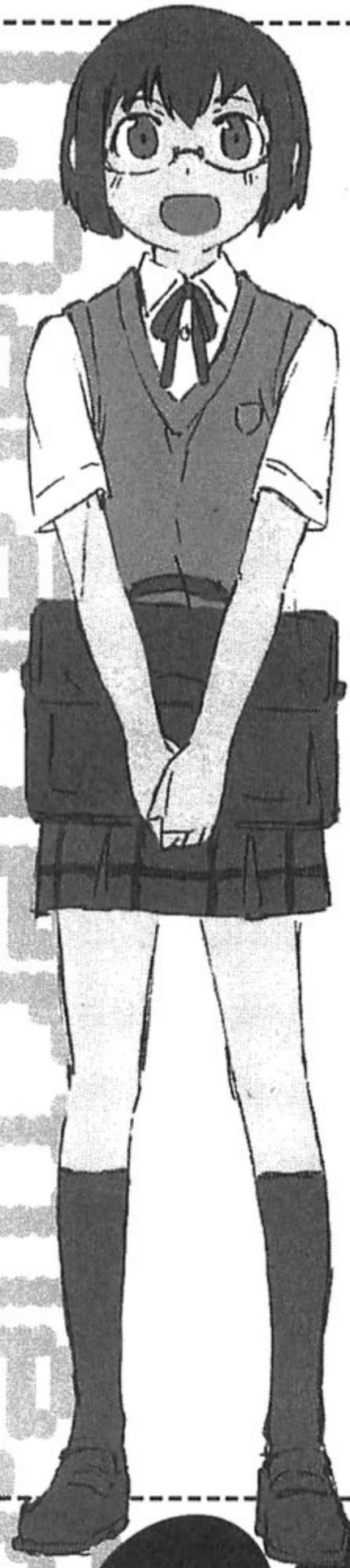
"… Yes!"

Kirino nodded. I smiled warmly.

Well, I hope you make some real friends, ones you'll have much more fun than being with me, ones whom you could play with without having to worry about unnecessary stuff.

Well, for the short while till then, I will be with you.

Character file.03
Manami Tamura



田村麻奈実【たむら・まなみ】

◆京介の幼馴染み。ちょっと天然が入っていることを除けば「平均的」なポジションにいる女の子。

◆性別:女
◆年齢:17歳
◆身長:160cm
◆体重:50Kg
◆3サイズ:84/59/86

03

ore no imouto ga konnani kawaii wake ga nai
第三章

Chapter 3

It was during the following day that a nice reply came back from the administrator of the group 'Get Together, Otaku Girls'.

After coming home from school, I was dragged into Kirino's room like usual, and now I'm reading the response from the community's current administrator, nicknamed 'Saori'.

"Nice to hear from you, Kiririn-sama. I am 'Saori', the administrator of the community 'Get Together Otaku Girls'. Please allow me to get straight to the point. Thank you for sending in the entry application letter for our community. We gladly accept it. We will surely become great friends, since our ages and hobbies are similar. If you'd like, we'd be pleased if you participated in the tea party we are planning to have in a few days. We hope to have a nice chat with you. I hope for a good response. We wish you the best."

"Nickname 'Saori'-san, eh? Hmm... This person seems to be really well mannered."

From reading her message, I got the impression that she is a high classed lady. How should I put it... she has this dignity that you can smell. There's also this frail kind of feeling... My instinct tells me she must be a very cute girl.

By now, I noticed that Kirino was looking at me as if she was looking at animal droppings.

"Disgusting... What are you smiling about?"

"I'm not smiling. I am just relieved she seems to be a good person."

"Well... somewhat. She's the high classed, good mannered lady type? ...I can't imagine one. We don't have that kind of person in my classroom."

That's right. Your friends are all showy, just like you. They might be attractive and nice looking, but they still have an aura that makes them difficult to approach. It's like how they fend off all but similar types of people. They have thorns that prick you when you come by.

"S-So, you are joining, right?"

"Y-Yes... I will."

Kirino nods with a somewhat troubled expression. Jeez... She's been like this since last time... It's like something's worrying her, but she can't say it in words and is hiding it. The issue about meeting older men was solved. What else can it be...? It bothers me, and I try to ask but...

"Hey, you have something bothering you, right?"

"Not really."

You see? She's like this. Looks like she really doesn't want to tell me. If that's how she is, I can't really do anything. I do feel uneasy though... Heh... I'll encourage her, at least.

"Oh well. Do your best then."

"Huh? Why are you saying it like it's not your business ?"

Kirino stabs me with her eyes that seem to be saying ' pigs should die'. Why do I get these horrific taunts when I gave her warm words of encouragement? Why is this exchange so wrongly equal?

While I'm frowning, Kirino goes on.

"Life Counselling, the continuation."

She cuts up words and mutters. She continues ordering me like that's something natural for her.

"Come along with me."

...She's telling me something bizarre.

"... Explain how I, a male, should participate in a girls only meeting?"

"Why don't you just cross-dress?"

"I won't! Don't say it so simply! If they found out, I will be known as some perverted dude who took such a risk just to participate in a girls only offline meeting!"

"It's fine. I've considered those risks."

"That's only your risks! I'm talking about mine! I'm not prepared to be given the title 'hentai'! I'm not all right at all!"

More importantly...

"If I cross-dress, they'll find out in an instance!"

"Oh yes... That's true."

Kirino seems to understand finally. She nodded a few times, understanding the issue, and then blurted out demonically.

"Why weren't you born with good looks?"

"I'll fucking kill you! Out of all the things you said to me, that hurt me the most! Quit looking at me like you're watching something pitiful! Immediately!"

Only after all this complaining, Kirino took her eyes off me and made a small clicking sound with her tongue.

"All right then... We'll use a more normal method."

"You're making it sound like I really want to go to the meeting and I'm begging you to let me go. Oh well... I'll at least hear what you got to say. What do you mean by a more normal method?"

"How about I send 'Saori'-san a message now, saying that someone who I know (male, age 17) desperately

wants to go to a girl filled tea party and keeps begging me. I pity him too much, so can take him along."

"That only makes the distinction between 'a sneaky hentai' and a 'proud and grand hentai'."

Rather, she'd decline it naturally, since it's a girls only meeting. It will ruin the mood completely.

After telling her that, Kirino became unhappy. She bit her lip and stared at me.

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Like I said, it's impossible for me to participate... Oh come on stop staring at me. I get it..."

I place the pointer at the topic for the offline meeting and click. The details are displayed.

"Look at this place... Is it some cafe? They didn't rent the whole place out or anything, right? Then I'll sit in a seat nearby. Well, I won't be able to get into the conversation, but I will watch over you." I notice while I'm telling her this, but I've just been sitting close by.

I, of course, expected some cursing from Kirino but...

"All right, that will do."

I don't know why, but Kirino nodded obediently. My eyes are wide open in surprise.

"I-I see..."

Come to think of it, why did she ask for me to go along ? I didn't have the chance to ask her but... Just me being beside her is fine...? I don't get it at all...

In any case, next Sunday I will have to hide in the corner and watch my sister on her sortie at the 'Get Together Otaku Girls' offline meeting.

The date for the meeting came within moments.

An hour and a half on the train from the station close by. My current coordinates are... Akihabara Station, Electronics Street Entrance.

For a weekend afternoon, I expected the famous Akiba to be more crowded, but it wasn't as bad as I expected. From the looks of the station and the station square, it looked rather well maintained and clean.

"Oh wow! The Radio Department! The Gamers Head Store!"

Though she kept her tone down, Kirino seemed to be unable to hide her feelings.

...She sure looks excited. It looks like it wasn't only me who's never been to Akiba before. Her usual territory in Tokyo would be Shibuya or Harajuku. She did have all the merchandise, but maybe she's still a beginner otaku. I check the time with my phone.

"Hey Kirino. We don't have much time left. If you want to go to the shops, then make that after the offline meeting is finished."

"I know. Hey, will you keep away from me? I don't want them to get the wrong idea that we're on a date or something."

"..."

While Kirino was giving me such harsh comments, it was still her first offline meeting. So she was dressed up

with the best clothes she could find; adult looking clothes that reveal her shoulders with a mini skirt and boots. She had expensive looking charms at the right places too.

Even I can see that her fashion is outgoing.

She's dressed in the way that you'd almost want to tell her to go to Odaiba or Shibuya.

True, she doesn't match up with me, who's wearing a plain shirt with jeans.

But still, it's too late now so I won't tell her this but... You're going to go into this meeting dressed like that...? Sure, you look cute but... Oh well... I wonder if you'll be all right.

"All right. We'll split up for now. You're meeting up here, right? I'll be going to the shop directly and standby for you."

"Huh? Oh, yes I got it."

"Don't look so worried. I'll be watching over you."

"I-I'm not looking worried! Just go already, idiot!"

"Yeah, fine. Later."

I wave my hand and turn my back around.

Going past the shop that Kirino called the 'Gamers Head Store', I get to the main street. The shops nearby have games and wires and such put in a huge mess. You don't really understand what they're trying to sell at first glance. It resembled the candy stores I used to go when I was small. It was this feeling of getting excited even though I had nothing I wanted in particular.

...There sure are a lot of people here.

This area really gets crowded. But from what I hear, when Akihabara was the most crowded, they used to have unauthorized concerts on this main road. Maybe Akihabara has calmed down from those days... ...It's like some festival.

It was still lively enough to make me feel that way.

Impressed, I take out the map I printed out from my shoulder bag and take a look.

...Oh I wasn't supposed to come this way. It was the other way around.

I looked behind to turn the other way, where I saw Kirino still standing there.

Since I walked off like that, I can't just turn back. I took a left turn and left the large streets filled with electronics shops. I made another left turn, and then went straight ahead, going past the rail tracks. There, I found a narrow building to the right.

It's the Shosen Book-tower, according to the map. After coming all this way, it doesn't look too much like a city of Otaku, but rather like an area around any other ordinary station.

I cross the street and stop at the entrance of the Book-tower.

...Uhh, I am going the right way... right?

I keep following the road. After a few minutes walking , the cityscape changed into a quiet neighbourhood. If this map is correct, there should be a cafe around here...

"Ah hah, here!"

I stop walking and look up at the building resembling a lodge.

Cafe Pretty Garden looks like a cosy white shed from outside. I walk up the short steps and open the wooden door. The door opened with a nice ring of bells.

Ring *Ring*

"Welcome back, my Master!"

Maids in French maid outfits greeted me all at once.

I closed the door pretending to have seen nothing.

"... ... W-Wh-Wha-What was THAT?!"

I held the door closed tight with my hands and murmur. Well I should understand. I do understand. ... But still, give me some time. My brain needs some time to digest what just happened. Even though the cityscape looked normal, I should have known since I am still in Akiba...

I heard rumours about it... It's what they call...

This place was a Maid Cafe?!

After my brain finally digested the situation, my brain was able to produce some response.

I take a deep breath, and open the door again with deep fear.

Ring *Ring*

"Welcome back, my Master!"

The scene I saw just now came back... Damn it. It wasn't an illusion after all. Maids come up to me cutely to greet me.

A white apron with frills, skirts that are way too short, and long socks...

Their outfit was surely for cuteness only.

I really wanted to go home, but since I promised to be here ahead of her, there's no way I can turn back. I prepare myself and take a step forward.

Kousaka Kyousuke, age 17. My first maid cafe experience...

"Are you here alone, my Master?"

"Uh huh..."

"All right, then please follow me this way."

The maid leads me to one of those seats for singles. The cafe was decorated like any other cafe on the inside. Orange lighting lit up the rather dark interior, with the somewhat old western furniture reproducing a western mansion well. By the way, even though it's lunchtime, there aren't many guests. Did those people reserve this place for the offline meeting?

"Will this seat be fine for you?"

"Oh yes, sure."

The maid pulls the chair out for me and I take a seat. It still doesn't feel natural to me after all.

All the maids have pretty cute faces.

"This is our menu here. My master, do you have any order on how would you like to be addressed?"

"H-Huh? What is that?"

"Oh, please decide how we should call you~ By the way, we have on order 'My master', 'Dear sir', '-kun', '-chan', ' oniichan', 'oniisama' and many others."

...Maid cafes sure are something. It isn't something an ordinary high school student like me can easily conquer.

I guess I have no choice but to smile. Be as it may. I make a fearless smile and tell her.

"...Well, I don't really care about it."

"Oh really? Then I'm going to call you 'oniichan' then, Oniichan!"

Her attitude suddenly becomes needlessly friendly. Already, she doesn't sound like a maid. Maybe I'm not supposed to make remarks like that. Well, this maid is apparently over 20 years old...

"Did you say something, oniichan?"

"Oh no, nothing!"

How scary! I thought she could read my mind. As I wiped the sweat off my forehead with my hand, the

maid brings me water. I gulp it down to relieve my thirst and take a look at the menu.

Well, I haven't had any lunch yet so... Something that would fill me up...

"...?"

I look down at the list of items with a puzzled expression. Why you ask?

Well, how should I describe it... Why don't I give some examples instead?

<3 Lunch <3

Lovelove Rice Omelette from the Maid (with Ketchup of Otafuku) 900 Yen

Imouto's Handmade Curry (Parupunte Flavour, Begiragon Flavour, Zaraki Flavour) 1000 Yen[5]

Special made ramen from your Tsundere Class-rep 800 Yen

<3 Drinks <3

Spirit of Saiyan 300 yen[6]

Choushinsui 300 yen[7]

Shinseijyu Juice 300 yen[8]

...See, it's really hard to figure out what they are. At least the lunch items sound like food. I don't have any idea what I'll be served if I order these drinks. What am I supposed to do here?

I had no choice but to ask the maid.

"Excuse me, what is this... uhh... Spirit of... Saiyan?"

"Oh, that's vegetable juice, oniichan!"

Then just write that down will you? ...Of course I wouldn't say that aloud. This must be how it works here so...

By the way, Choushinsui was 7Up and Shinseijyu Juice was mixed juice.

"Have you decided, oniichan?"

"Not yet. I'm sorry."

Embarrassingly I'm so nervous I'm speaking formally.

"By the way, my recommendation is Imouto's Handmade Curry. I'm going to make it myself, oniichan!"

"Then I will order that."

That bitch! She chose the most expensive one with no hesitation! ...Wait, I'm at fault for being controlled by her so easily...

"We got an order! Imouto's Handmade Curry, Zaraki Flavour please!"

What... Zaraki flavour? It sounds like the craziest one already. Damn it. Let it be!

They won't give me something that's completely inedible, will they?

"Oh whatever..."

I'm already tired just from ordering something. Anyhow, I can take some rest for now.

I make my chair creek and look up at the ceiling.

It was then, that a group of customers appeared.

Ring *Ring*

"Welcome back, my Master!"

Now they've come. I take a cap out from my bag and put it on tight.

I looked at the entrance pretending it to be natural.

A pack of girls come in. I don't see Kirino yet. Heh, they are quite plain as I thought. I know this is rude, but most look quite geeky.

There are a few that seem to be wearing those cosplay costumes. Huh?

Whoa... There's one amazing one.

Even though I'm keeping this to myself, you might think I'm really rude. But well... Would you still be able to say that after seeing that? I looked carefully at the girl who lead the group.

Well, you see... She's huge. I mean really huge. She's just really huge.

She’s maybe around 180cm. Well... if you only note that, she'd sound like some super model. But it's also how she's dressed that's amazing. She's visibly otaku.

She has a bandana on her hair, wears those round spectacles, her long sleeved plaid shirt is tucked into her pants, and she carries a rugged backpack.

What's more, the backpack has posters sticking out of it.

...In short, she's dressed like the typical Otaku that comes up on TV, but has a super model like body.

I'm not lying. I can't even believe it, but there she is before my eyes so I just have to believe it.

Shit... I'm so surprised my throat is dry.

Phew... Tokyo is a scary place after all. This taught me something...

My head's quite confused, so I gulp down the water to try and calm myself.

In front my sight was the huge girl I described just now. She seems to be talking to the maid.

"I reserved for 1300 de gozaru"[9]

This jumbo is speaking in an outrageous way.

The maid doesn't seem even a bit surprised. She's pro.

"All right. May I ask for your name?"

"Saori Bajeena"[10]

PFFT I spat out the water, coughing and choking.

cough cough cough cough cough

"Oh my, a-are you all right, oniichan?"

The maid pats my back as I'm in pain. Shit... it's gone into my windpipe... *Cough*cough* Damn it... I'm dying but...

Let me make this comment before I die.

You're the nickname 'Saori'-san?! And what Bajeena? Aren't you Japanese? Oh right... The community name was strange from the start so...

Well you see... it isn't unusual when the internet personality doesn't match the real life personality. I accept that. But you see, this is what you can call fraud!

I didn't expect the high-class pretty girl I imagined to come up...

Still, you're more like completely diagonal than the opposite of expectations! I've never had anything more surprising than this in my 17 years of life.

Maybe this is some really badly done comedy. Damn it . I'm seriously doing tsukkomi with someone I haven't ever talked to...[11]

cough cough "I'm sorry to cause trouble..."

"Oh don't worry. I'll bring some more water. But oniichan, I'll be mad if you do it again."

The maid knocks my head lightly. She isn’t surprised by unexpected events and still continues with the serving attitude. She really has the professional spirit.

"Really, I'm sorry."

I am blushing with tears. And with the commotion I caused just now, it seems like I got the attention of everyone in the hall.

The few male customers stare at me with sharp eyes that silently say "Damn, I envy you so much". No no, I didn't do that on purpose! Damn it. I feel so out of place.

I glance at the entrance again, and there I see Kirino with her arms crossed and giving me a look that's telling me "What the fuck you standing out for? Wanna die?". Sorry, but I couldn't help it. It's Bajeena's fault!

I try to explain that to her with my eyes only.

"Heh!"

I don't know if my eye contact worked or not, but Kirino looked aside.

But really, she's standing out badly.

That's nothing unexpected, as the other members of the Get Together Otaku Girls were (other than the jumbo one) a little plain looking, and a few quiet looking girls in cosplay. Hair dying is rare.

In a group like that, a teenage fashion magazine model (hair dyed brown) with full fashion coordination comes up. It's no wonder she would stand out.

Two maids come up and bow to the community members gathered around the entrance waiting to be escorted.

"We are sorry to have made you wait. Let us take you to your seats."

The group of girls move in one by one behind the maids.

Kirino and the others were led to the corner of the restaurant. They put a few tables together to make seats for the group.

The approximately ten members split into smaller groups naturally and take seats, chatting to each other. From what I hear them talking about, it seems like this is their first offline meeting. So that means, all of them have met each other for the first time. But...

"..."

K-Kirino has become isolated...

She's sitting in the corner all by herself. She's looking around the room, sitting strangely stiff. She's just like the kid who's left all alone in elementary school when the teacher asked the people to split up in groups.

This is pitiful... I held my chest tight and watched.

"Umm..."

Kirino, frightened, tries to speak up, but only after exchanging two or three words, they stop talking. It's like they're scared of each other. They're supposed to be a group of people with the same hobby, yet they don't look like that at all. It's like they aren't speaking the same language, or like there is some invisible wall...

I clicked my tongue.

Right... I had a slight feeling things might turn out like this...

Kirino emits this princess-like aura that tells commoners to stand back.

She's pretty, cute, and has the thorns that keeps away all others who don't have the similar traits. Of course,

that works fine at school. There are many types of people at school, so those with the same traits get together and form a group.

And Kirino had been the center of the most gorgeous group, and there all she had to do was dress extra fashionably, and act cute.

That princess-like, thorny aura worked as charisma to lure those with the similar properties. But here, it doesn't work like that. The people Kirino wants to get along with have absolutely different traits compared to those who she gets along with at school. If I were to relate this situation to something...

Well, it's like throwing a 'wolf that wants to be friends with sheep' in a herd of sheep. However hard the wolf tries to talk to the sheep, they will all be freaked out and think "Why is she in our herd?"

"..."

I bite my lips out of frustration. Oh, they ran away from Kirino again. They really only last exchanging two or three words. At first they will respond, but soon they shift to another group's topic, and leave Kirino.

...Rather, I don't understand a thing about what I can hear them speaking.

It's like I've wandered into some foreign country...

I face palm and sigh. That was when Kirino looked at me with a look seeking help.

...Don't make an expression like you're about to cry. That's not how you usually are.

I was gripping my hand tight, and that was when...

"Sorry for the wait. Here's Imouto's Handmade Curry, Oniichan!"

"Oh thanks."

This damn maid... you brought it at the worst possible timing! My sister saw me make a maid call me oniichan! I'm screwed!

Kill me please... I am shaking in embarrassment, but still looked at Kirino. Kirino wasn't looking at me anymore, but that doesn't matter. I grip my hand tight, and look at her sharply.

Hey Kirino, I can't do anything for you. But I'm still looking after you here.

So work hard, Kirino. Work hard, Kirino. Work hard! I send her meaningless telepathy.

Damn it.

What part of this is handmade? This taste is obviously pre-packaged...

The offline meeting continued for two more hours, and they finally did some gift exchange thing to wrap it up.

Kirino was unable to make any proper communication , and of course didn't make any friends either...

Even worse, whoever brought it, the gift Kirino got was some cheap expandable hand thing.

Hey, that's unacceptable. This is too cruel.

They have proper prizes for losers in bingo...

My sister, who's playing with that hand thing all alone , looks too pitiful.

...Man I'm actually crying.

Has there ever been a sight that was more teary than this in my 17 years of life?

By the way, I'm outside the shop now, standing a little away from the group.

That was when the administrator of the community and the organizer of this offline meeting, 'Saori' made the closing speech.

"Thanks to your cooperation, our commemorative first tea party has concluded without trouble. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart."

A happy cheer comes up. That's how a community representative should be. Even though she looks like that and talks in ninja-speak, she’s strangely popular among the otaku girls. Since she's standing out physically, it's like she's a teacher escorting a group of middle-schoolers.

"The tea party is finished for now, but those who still have time and those who want to talk more with the new friends you made, please head off on your own to the

second and third parties. I'll be writing up another post about the next event, so everyone be sure to participate! Now scram!"

Another huge cheer. Everybody starts saying their goodbyes, and then invitations like "Hey let's go to Tora no Ana." and "Where should we go next”? and "Hey, let's have some deep conversation about couplings in Gundam Seed.”

But my sister, Kirino, is not in the ring of them having fun conversation. The offline party members leave in groups of two and three.

By the way, after making the closing comments, 'Saori' ran off quickly.

Did she have some urgent business?

...And after people have gone away, Kirino was standing there all alone. It's like she still can't give up the hope that someone might still invite her. She looks exhausted and her shoulders are slouching. Her cute clothes she put all the effort to coordinate only add to her misery now. That was completely counterproductive.

She was like a soldier from a losing country with broken sword and no more arrows. What's worse, she has the hand toy in her hand.

I took my cap off and slowly went towards my lonely sister.

"...Say no word. You worked hard."

I put my hand on her head, but she slaps it away quickly.

Ah right. No need for pity.

Kirino was looking down and doesn't want to show me her expression but...

If she can stay strong like that, it's fine. You failed this time, but if you reflect on your mistakes and stand up again, you can challenge as many times you want, right?

"All right Kirino, since you came all the way to Akiba, why not go sightseeing?"

I give her a back slap, and she responds with a nasty tone.

"That hurts, idiot. But really, what was that. Suddenly spraying water..."

"But really, I couldn't help that."

As we continued with this needless talk, Kirino makes a huge sigh.

"... I couldn't talk at all."

"That's right. But things start off like that. No need to worry."

"Not really. Wh-Why... I-I acted like normal... but why do they avoid me? Damn it's so annoying! So annoying!"

She stomps and bites hard out of frustration.

"..."

I can't tell her to stop, since I have experience with that too. Having times when I could only transform sadness into anger to disperse it...

My sister, I understand you are pissed, but I don't think it's right to kick your brother out of anger. I'm not just some wall. You know I feel pain when I get kicked?

Well I won't get mad. Even though it hurts for me, it must hurt for you too, so I'll bear it for today.

"Ouch! You bitch! Using the heel is out of the question! Damn! How can I keep taking this! I'm not that accepting !"

As I was taking my sister's raging attacks...

Someone unexpected appeared.

"Hey! Kiririn-shi! Phew! So good you were still here!"

"Y-You're... S-Saori-san?"

Panting from the run was the administrator of the community, Saori.

"Oh my, all the formalities. No need. It's between you and I. Nevertheless, really, I'm glad. I was just about to call you up."

Saori makes a smile. But she's really outgoing. Her ninja speak is also weird. I thought I got used to it already from hearing it from far, but now that she's speaking to us, I really don't know how to respond.

It seems Kirino isn't good at dealing with this either, and only managed to ask shyly.

"S-Something to do with me?"

"Uh huh!"

Saori nodded making a like expression. She makes a strangely cute expression despite her huge body. The thick round glasses cover half of it but her face does look quite decent up close. Unlike someone I won't name, maybe she is a beauty without her glasses.

All of that aside, Saori raised a finger up and said.

"Well actually, I was going to ask you out to the secondary party."

"Huh?"

Kirino is confused by the unexpected offer. Before she replies, the thick glasses locked onto my face.

"Kiririn-shi, who is the man by the way? If it's not my misunderstanding, I must have seen him in the restaurant... Oh I see."

Saori seems to have arrived at some conclusion.

"He must be your boyfriend."

"NOOOOO!"

We both deny at the exact same time. What kind of misunderstanding can you make out of all the choices?

"Oh you say it's not like that? Excuse me. But I found him watching Kiririn-shi closely in the restaurant. I thought those eyes were with love."

"Hell no! Quit it please! I feel sick already just from imagining."

Damn this sister is annoying. Isn't there any better way to fix her misunderstanding?

While thinking so, I add to her.

"I'm called Kousaka Kyousuke. I'm her genuine brother. Don't get me wrong."

"Ah huh! So you must be Kiririn-shi's look unlike brother."

...Leave us alone.

After nodding, Saori makes a light bow to me.

"Well then, let me introduce myself formally. You must know already but I go by the name Saori Bajeena.

Call me 'Saori'."

"Thank you for being so proper."

And what was that ninja speak for. You really do sound otaku. You know you keep switching the way you address yourself?

I make those comments in my heart, and bow back.

"So then, Kyousuke-shi, uhh is it alright to call you Kyousuke-shi? How about you join in, Kyousuke-shi?"

"Join...? To that secondary-party thing?"

"Of course. What's your answer?"

Whoa, don't suddenly come up close to me. You surprised me.

I pull myself back a step, and that was when Kirino spoke up in a little worried fashion.

"Umm... will many others be coming?"

So that means she doesn't want to go. Of course I understand why. If she knows she's going to be treated as an outcast again if she goes, then of course she won't find that fun.

Since Kirino has been treated well elsewhere, she must find it even more unpleasant.

But Saori shook her head, and sticks four fingers up.

"It will be four people including Kiririn-shi and Kyousuke-shi. I want to invite you because I wasn't able to talk to you much back there. Well, it's not anything major. I thought we might just go to McDonalds or something and talk, and then go shopping or something."

"Well, hmm..."

After hearing the details, Kirino is apparently interested in it, and starts thinking. If it's something like that, then I know I won't be excluded, so maybe it's all right for me to go.

That's what she must be thinking.

It's a great chance. What's there to think about?

So I thought I should push Kirino, and told this to Saori.

"I don't mind, that is, if she says she's all right with it."

"So, how is it, Kiririn-shi?"

"Hmm..." Kiririn tried to look like she was thinking more, and after taking so long, she made her cheeks pink and...

"F-Fine. If you insist on it, then I'll go..."

She said it so childishly it was hard for me not to laugh .

She doesn't look younger than me normally, but occasionally she makes this little sister like expression, and that cuteness makes me smile.

"Oh that's great! Then let's go you two! The other one is already waiting at McDonalds."

Saori unsheathes the posters in her backpack like a light sabre and points at the direction.

This jumbo otaku looking girl who talks in ninja speak and is the administrator of a community...

Honestly, she only looks like a weirdo who's thinking of nothing... But maybe...

She has something that allows her to gain admiration among the otaku as their leader.

After meeting the final participant of the secondary party, that suspicion changed into conclusion.

We are sitting in the corner sofa seat on the second floor of the closest McDonalds from Pretty Garden.

Two tables are put together to make a seat for four.

I sit besides Kirino, facing me is Saori, and facing Kirino is the final participant. We have drinks in front of each of us. Kirino, Saori and I bought drinks downstairs before coming up, and just a few seconds ago, we first met the final participant.

By the way, ever since the four of us met up, no one spoke a word.

But really, she's dressed really amazing in a different way from Saori.

After seeing the final participant, I opened my eyes wide.

Oh yeah, I didn't really see this person's face much but. .. She was sitting in the opposite corner from Kirino all alone and fiddling with her mobile.

Since she is looking down the whole time, I can't see her face, but she has some beautiful black hair.

And I guess you call this... cosplay...

The clothes she was wearing was a dress in midnight black too. Many rose flower petal-like frilly things were attached to it, making it seem gorgeous. She can probably participate in a ball with this.

"It's been bothering me forever but, looking at it from close, she looks very much like... Suigintou."

That was Kirino's comment. But you see Kirino, this stands out in another sense different from you, eh?

I don't know what role she was cosplaying, but this is apparently putting in too much effort. It's too serious.

After checking that everyone has taken their seats, Saori introduced us.

"These two are, Kiririn-shi, and our special guest, the big brother, Kyousuke-shi. This is our community member..."

"...Nickname, 'Kuroneko'[12]" The final one finally raised her head and introduced herself randomly.

It was a blank emotionless tone.

"U-Um, I'm Kiririn. N-Nice to meet you."

Kirino spoke nervously. It's somewhat unfitting for her , but she was like this the whole time during the offline meeting.

"I'm Kousaka Kyousuke. Excuse me for suddenly participating."

I follow my sister and introduce myself. A response comes in a dark voice.

"...Right. Well, nice to meet you, for now."

I'll keep it simple but, that Goth-Lolita woman was a hell of a beauty.

That said, she was quite a different type from Kirino.

Long straight black hair neatly cut at the forehead, white skin, pointed eyes, and a birthmark under her left eye.

I don't know if it’s the right way to describe the woman in the dress but, she's a ghost-like Japanese style beauty.

I guess the red color contact lenses are part of her cosplay.

The looks of her told she was mean and gloomy... Like she would start using black magic anytime. She is beautiful, but had none of the glamour Kirino had. It's like a black aura of negative vectors were streaming from all over her body.

"It looks like everyone's arrived, so I'm going to ask now. What was your intention of luring me into some place like this, administrator?"

"Haha! I told you back then. I wanted to invite you into the secondary party. But it really was close. The instant I finished talking, you started off, so I had to chase you like crazy. You didn't even give me time to invite you!"

Saori elbows the Goth-loli woman lightly, but she stays expressionless. She hasn't changed her expression a bit since she appeared, which is way too creepy.

But now I know why Saori was running off.

...Ah hah. Now I start to understand this Saori woman's intentions.... The reason why she chose the two, Kirino and the Goth-loli woman...

This secondary party must be held with the purpose of inviting those who had been excluded in the offline party just now, and have them enjoy themselves too.

That's why no one else is here.

... "I'd like to get friendlier with those who I didn't have the chance to talk to as much." She says.

That's a good way of wording it. Despite how she looks, she can think for others quite well.

Maybe she sensed our situation when she didn't ask any reason why I was to come along with Kirino, and let me participate here as a special guest.

Then, maybe like she looks, she has some huge generosity.

sip

Kirino looks like she still isn't feeling secure, and sips her cola frantically.

She doesn't seem to notice, but the 'Kuroneko' seems to have noticed.

I guess that's why she had been looking unhappy ever since the first meeting.

Well, we're thankful of them in a sense, but we feel somehow uneasy as she is being merciful to us, since we

can see her intentions. Well, I really can't do anything about that.

Kuroneko must feel quite troubled too, since I feel quite troubled myself.

But you see, if I were the administrator, I wouldn't make the effort to specially invite those that got excluded . Those who didn't fit in with the atmosphere of a first time meeting would probably not come to the next meeting, so Saori could have just forgotten about them.

So this is what I believe. This strange fashion jumbo woman is a good person.

"By the way, Kuroneko-shi, there's no need to address me formally as 'administrator'. You can just call me 'Saori '. Since we're all here, no need to be polite, all we need is to do have fun."

"You've got some nerves to call yourself 'Saori' with a body like that."

This Goth-loli... the moment she said we don't need to worry about being polite, what could she be saying?

"Oh my, no one ever told me that before."

"Of course not. Since your nickname fits perfectly with your internet personality, you were acting like some high-class lady. But the real deal is like this. This is nothing other than fraud. It's even bad as a joke. I'll give you some good advice. You can start calling yourself ' Andre' or something. Then people won't get confused. Oh yeah... your weird way of speaking, and how you're dressed... you're..."

"Some Ugly-Otaku from what era?"

Sudden honest words came out of Kirino, who had been all frightened and small.

"H-Hey! Not needing to be polite doesn't mean you can say whatever horrible stuff you like!"

Well, I did think stuff like that too... but you're not supposed to say it aloud!

She invited you two, who were excluded. What kind of horrible way to return the favour was that?

Especially you there, Kirino! You've been all quiet until now, and that was your first comment? Kneel down and apologize!

Don't just be looking aside and drinking cola!

But Saori, who was humiliated like that, seemed not to mind.

"Well well, Kyousuke-shi, no need to be so serious. I do appreciate you standing up for me, but such words like that are only as effective as a light breeze. Rather, I would say it feels nice. So don't mind it, really. You can humiliate me all you want too."

"I was about to think you were a really good person, but with your final line, now I don't really understand."

How tolerant can you be of people bad mouthing you?

As I was looking at the situation dimly, Saori puts up a finger and swings up to the table.

"And so, now that we've become comfortable, how about we introduce ourselves once again?"

"Though I don't really think that conversation we had now justifies as becoming comfortable..."

That wasn't a bad proposal. But Saori's remark made everyone silent.

"..."

Come on you two... say something will you? It's uneasy now.

With no other option, I tried to persuade them.

"Don't you think that's a good plan?"

"..."

Still no response. It looks like that Kuroneko and Kirino are confused.

Kuroneko probably isn't really into this kind of thing, and for Kirino the failure she had back then must be affecting her. Hmm... If they make you introduce yourself out of nowhere, then it's quite difficult... Though outsiders shouldn't speak up like this, I guess it can't be helped here. I made a proposal.

"Then, how about we ask a question one at a time to the person being introduced? Then it will be easier to speak up. Oh yeah, passing is fine, so go on take turns!"

"Hmm great idea! As expected of Kyousuke-shi. So then, let's begin with questioning time for Kuroneko- shi! "

"...Yeah being so bossy."

Saori tries with obvious gestures to calm Kuroneko down who was eyeing her sharply.

Kuroneko blows on her hot coffee, takes a sip, and murmurs something like it didn't really matter.

"Well it's fine then. And so, I did reveal my name. What else am I to say?"

"Well, then my question is... let me see..."

I expected she would ask 'the easiest question', but she didn't.

"How about, 'what freaked you out the most in your life'?"

"...Don't you have any questions that are normally for introductions? Why are you asking stuff they would ask during interviews for game show TV program participants?"

I have to agree with that. I can't expect what this jumbo will say... But Kuroneko didn't ask any further.

You're quite calm now.

And the conversation went more and more smooth.

"So what was it, the moment in life I was freaked out the most? That will be..."

Kuroneko was thinking with a plain expression, and then continued talking blankly.

"Oh yes, it was when I was dancing Caramelldansen with cat ears and a tail to upload to Nicovideo, and my little sister saw me. Even I was freaked out that time."

I don't know what the Nicovideo stuff is, but I now know you aren't the silent type like you look at all.

Since half of what you said is like encrypted to me, I can't really make any comment.

"Oh Kuroneko-shi, you have quite a cute personality. And you also have a little sister?"

"Yes. Her jaw was dropped like she saw something impossible."

Of course. Just like I am now. I would understand how she felt exactly.

And we went on talking about Kuroneko's sister, but for the whole time, Kirino didn't speak a single word. I guess she's still nervous.

But with great timing, Saori asked Kirino to speak up.

"So then, next is your turn, Kiririn-shi. Ask some questions to Kuroneko-shi."

"Oh, eh? Me? Umm..."

Suddenly being pointed at by Saori, Kirino blinks.

"N-Nothing much... I guess? Let me pass..."

...Stupid Kirino! What the heck are you doing? Saori was being considerate of you and didn't ask the most obvious question to make! Ask it! Ask about her clothes!

"..."

It looks like my wishes didn't get through to Kirino, she looks down and shrinks.

I guess it's like her getting excluded back there traumatised. That's why...

What should we do... I scratch my cheek and ask a random question to Kuroneko.

"What's your favourite food?"

"Fish. Is this enough?"

Kuroneko blurts out like she finished her duty.

Damn... this woman doesn't seem to know proper manners addressing an elder...

"So then, next is Kiririn's turn to introduce herself."

"Oh... Me...? Umm... Well... I'm Kiririn..."

Kiririn is all stiff. Though she gave her name again, she's still looking down.

As if she won't allow the atmosphere to get dark, Saori speaks out at a great timing.

"So then, questioning time for Kiririn-shi! Go on, Kuroneko-shi!"

"Why are you dressed so awkwardly? I would understand if you were going to some mass date in Shibuya, but it's just wrong to dress like that when you're going to an offline meeting in Akiba."

This Goth-loli asks the most sensitive question without hesitation.

She's almost getting traumatized, so don't ask that!

Yeah, I did send telepathy to ask about the clothes, but that was not for you!

"Mmm...."

It seems like Kirino who had been all gloomy felt offended by this, and talked back at Kuroneko.

"Sorry for that. But I couldn't help it. These clothes suit me. Y-You yourself are..."

"...You are what? Say it out louder will you?"

Kuroneko whispers like she's sneering. Whoa... Amazing. It seems like we are being looked down on.

"Grr..."

Blood was rushing into Kirino's forehead veins. Uh oh. .. She's trying to hold herself back...

Kirino, who is normally short tempered, is using her normally nonexistent self-restraint ability, and takes a deep breath.

She must be raging inside, but didn't show it from the outside.

But something small would trigger her to explode. I'm so worried...

Hoping she would do something about the heightened tension, I eye Saori but...

Saori makes a face like she's saying 'Is anything wrong ?' And cocks her head sideways cutely.

It looks like she will keep silent on this and do nothing . Geez... What is she thinking?

With the smell of black powder in the air, their conversation continues.

"Let me revoke that pass I did before. Let me ask you a question. What kind of cosplay is that dress for? It isn't Suigintou, is it?"

"Oh, this? Of course it isn't Suigintou. It's so different. Do you even have eyes? It's the Queen of the Night from maschera. Don't tell me you don't know it?!"

I don't. Even if you seem surprised that we don't, that doesn't make a difference. It looks like Kirino didn't know either.

"Hmm? Maybe I might have heard the name before... Was it an anime?"

"Yes. '~maschera~ Lament of the Fallen Beast'. It's an action anime with the best story and animation this season. They air it on Thursday evenings, so be sure to watch it."

"Oh that's umm... Meruru's back-program.[13] If I remember, they call it a fail style, horrible drawing, jakigan[14], chuunibyou,[15] anime."

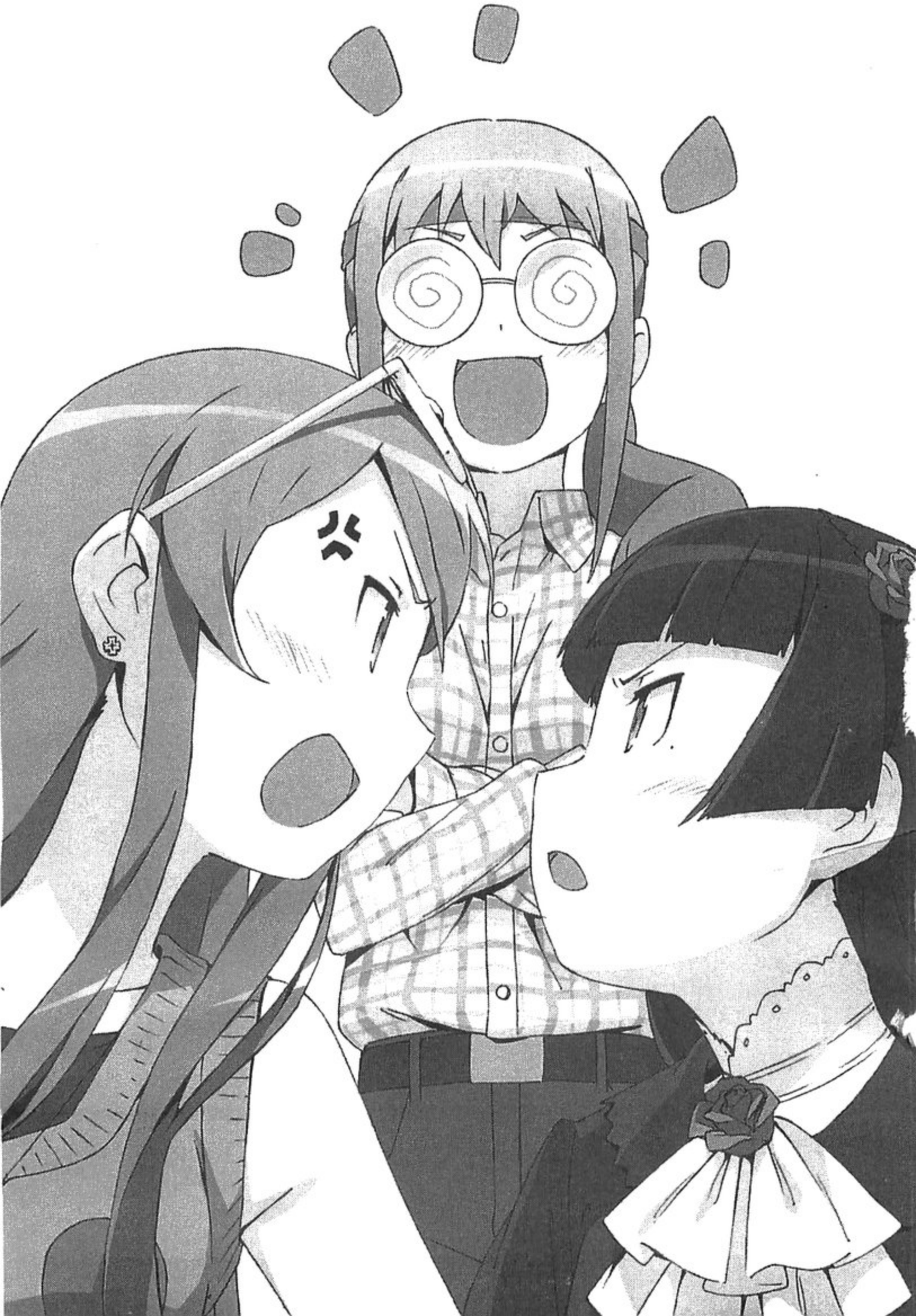
I imagine a button with a skull and bones being pressed right now.

"I heard something I can't ignore. What did you say? Meruru? You aren't talking about "Stardust Witch Meruru" are you? Heh! Battle Magical Girl anime are so out of style! Those are for retarded children and stupid men who only care about moe. It's just a crappy anime. Look at the viewer percentages. That program is more like the back program. Now quit talking about your delusions."

"Viewer percentages? What the heck are those for? Understand this. The program I watch is the front-program, and all the others are back-programs. This is the law in this world, so remember. From what I can tell,

you don't even watch Meruru! If you saw the final battle in the first season, you would never make such stupid remarks! Oh how pitiful... You didn't watch that... The animation was intensive and matched the super cool insert song! Don’t underestimate kid's anime!"

"You're the one who should shut up! What did you call it? Chuunibyou? I hate everything about that word! Every time works have any element that's considered so, they criticize it with that word without any discussion about the real content. What a bunch of tasteless idiots! And you're just one of those pigs too?”



What is this? Why are they suddenly fighting now?

"Hey... Wait, wait, wait a second... Don't stand up you two, take your seat! Calm down, it's just anime."

"JUST ANIME?"

Kirino and Kuroneko both look at me at once.

"S-Sorry, I shouldn't have said that."

Shit... Anime otaku are scary when they're serious. I look to Saori seeking help, but she's sipping orange juice like she doesn't have anything to do with it. I whisper to her.

"Do something about it, will you..."

"They've become so comfortable with each other. Haha . It looks like they were unexpectedly a good match."

"Do you have eyes or what?"

Since no one stops them, their argument continues.

"Heh, you've got a great personality. That's why you were ignored by everyone in the offline meeting. Do you understand?"

"Look who's talking. I saw you all alone, playing with your mobile. Soooo gloomy. No one will dare to strike up a conversation with you."

"Shut up... I suddenly felt like looking at some funny images about Asame-Shimbun" [16]

The two glare at each other standing up. Both of them are beautiful... But what a low-level argument this is...

Honestly, both are pointless. Geez... Why do beauties always have some problem with their personality? Thanks to you people, my prejudice against beauties has become even worse. Normal is the best after all... Ah, I want to see my childhood friend for no reason now...

As I kept trying to ignore reality like that, Saori snuck in to break the ugly argument.

"Well then, since the talking has finally gotten somewhere, why don’t we shift to the next topic. Oh yes, it's my turn now."

As Saori's voice goes through, everyone here focuses on her. She smiles with her cheeks up.

"So then formally again, I am 'Saori' Bajeena. I am the administrator of the 'Otaku Girls Get Together' community. As I've written in my profile page, I'm 15 years old. A 9th grade student. If I remember right, I'm the same age as Kuroneko-shi."

She was carefully trying to open up a conversation, but Kuroneko makes no reaction and ignores her completely.

Oh so these two are one year older than Kirino. I expected Kuroneko to be around that age but... Saori... she's younger than me...?

I looked at Saori thinking it's unbelievable.

"By the way, my three sizes from top to down are, 88, 60..."

"No need to tell me that."

"Heh. They're the same as Fujiwara Norika."

"Listen to me! Don't say it so proudly!"

Damn it. Why am I making all the comments alone...?

This is becoming way too much now.

I didn't come here to practice my tsukkomi skills...

"Someone please hurry up and ask her a question..."

Out of energy, I ask for help. Unexpectedly, it was Kuroneko who responded.

"Then, the question everyone must have wanted to ask , I will ask. Saori-san, what is that ugly otaku fashion and way of speaking?"

I really wanted to ask that! I praise her in my heart, but I was worried she might just respond by saying that's her natural self. If that happens, should I pull my sister and run off from this pervert?

My worries did not come true. This is the response Saori gave.

"Oh my how embarrassing... Actually, this is my first time organizing an offline meeting. I put in a lot of effort

to make up a personality that suits as a leader so that I will be liked by everyone as much as possible. ...So I'm a more quiet girl normally."

Err... Are you seriously saying that? Is how you speak part of acting and not just how you dress?

There's tons of things I want to ask but... I still can't believe the part about her being normally a quiet girl.

That's only what she believes herself.

Kuroneko, who asked the question, blinks her red eyes from surprise.

"I don't understand why putting in effort results in that. Heh, but it must be better than misunderstanding and fully equipping herself with brand name clothes, only to fail and get excluded."

"What the heck? So annoying... You can't argue about that can you? What is with that overkill Goth-loli dress? I didn't think someone would wear something like that to an offline meeting, even in Akiba!"

"What did you say?"

Kirino and Kuroneko again glare at each other. I guess I'll leave these two alone.

By the way, I noticed one thing.

There's Kirino who dressed up cute with the most trendy brands,

Kuroneko who cosplayed super seriously,

And Saori dressed in ugly-otaku clothes.

Three people with three different styles. Even though their personality and fashion is completely different, there is something shared between these three. It's that they all put in effort to dress up in the hope for the offline party to go well.

"Hmm..."

While hearing the argument between Kirino and Kuroneko, which made no sense, I review the past couple of hours.

Today, Kirino was able to meet otaku besides her for the first time, but honestly they were much different from what she expected. By otaku, I mean the more

narrow meaning of otaku, subculture maniacs into games and anime.

I'll say the most obvious, but it's that they all have a hobby they love so much. Yes, that's it. Loving R&B, loving basketball, loving mystery books, loving Japanese calligraphy, it's no different from that. But until now, I didn't think like that. I thought differently of otaku. Even though I didn't know much about them.

Right now, Kirino and Kuroneko are talking about anime in an arguing tone. But what difference does that have to high school girls talking about how crazy they are about their favourite idol inside a karaoke box? How different is it than celebrities talking about love stories in the corner of a fancy cafe? Maybe... Just maybe, there is no difference. Am I wrong?

Kirino said she couldn't reveal her hobby because of society's views. I understand that. Considering the image I had until yesterday, it's obvious how much prejudice society has against otaku. That's especially strong among middle school and high school kids.

...And not all of it is prejudice...

Since THEY are weird. They aren't normal, at least. I, who had prejudice, will speak out now that I was underestimating them. You people are weirder than I imagined!

Well anyhow, there are only three otaku I know now, so there might be the opinion that I shouldn't use these three as model examples. Maybe they are quite different from the model otaku figure.

So from here on, this is my comment I had at this instance, with heavy prejudice.

Otaku aren't that bad, are they? Though they are strange.

I look at the huge spectacled woman in obvious otaku fashion.

For example, she's nearly the same age as Kirino, but is great at making relationships smooth. She's strange in every kind of way, but she's praiseworthy in that she fulfills the role of the leader well, helping everyone enjoy themselves.

It's not only her who isn't bad.

You'll realize if you recall all the events today.

The maid cafe they had the offline meeting in, and that huge street that seemed like some festival... This secondary party too. Other than the fact that Kirino had been excluded and left alone, which was pitiful, there's nothing to have a bad image about. It’s because they seem to be having fun.

They get together with those who like the same thing, and play around...

It even makes me frustrated that I can't join in.

They care about how people look at them? They're afraid of prejudice? Then just come to this side. Now make some huge noise together with us! ...I feel like they are lending a hand out like that. Who exactly is? I don't really know.

If you insist on an answer, then I would say everyone. Even I don't know what I'm talking about though.

That’s why they are all here, doing so out of their own will.

Just like Kirino, who came here in search of friends.

Just look at this noisy argument between Kirino and Kuroneko.

Don't you think it's great that they can have such a heated argument like this on the very first day they met? That means they have 'something important' between them that resonated between the two.

From an outsider’s perspective, it might look strange at times.

But it's not something bad, that’s for sure. It's not something you can easily look down on or throw away.

Regardless of how strange it might look.

"Haha... You have said many things, you damn human ... Fine. Let's go outside bitch! I shall teach your body the true meaning of fear! You can cry in your next life!"

"Shut up! That's enough, you jakigan dempa woman!" [17]

"J-J-Jakigan... D-D-Dempa?! Hahaha... you said something you shouldn't have said! Aww, so pitiful. I can't save you no matter what happens. It's too late to be sorry. This negative aura, I can't stop anymore..."

"Are you stupid or what? Don't you feel embarrassed just being alive? How about you just die now?"

Err... Can I take back my comments from before?

Otaku, you see... Not all of them are good...

And after a while, we left McDonalds and, as Saori had planned, we did some light shopping in Akihabara. This incident (let me word it as incident for now) will be a long winding story, and I don't even want to look back at it, so I'll omit it. Rather, you understand, right? If you visit around Akiba with these members, what will happen? Just imagine!

You did? Right? Okay. If you add 150% to the damage I received in your imagination, then that will be quite close to what happened in reality.

Geez. I'm praiseworthy to not have run away.

By the way, Kirino and Kuroneko were dissing each other the whole time. And it almost always had some otaku talk in it. It began with anime, then went into games and manga, about how the couplings are whatever, and how the animation was blah, and how DVD prices are something... Really, I'm impressed at how much stuff they could insult each other with.

As evening began to creep up, and even after the secondary party was finished, it's still like that. They did exchange goodbyes, but still kept hostile about jakigan vs . magical girl anime.

"Hahaha, Kiririn-shi and Kuroneko-shi really seem to have gotten friendly."

"What part of today makes you say that? Maybe you need new glasses."

I'm saying that, but I understand.

Watching Kirino and Kuroneko argue, I raise my cheeks a bit.

Good for you, Kirino. You've now found someone you can shout about your hobby to in such a loud voice. I'm sure you will deny that, saying "Not at all" though...

But that's what you call a friend.

"...Well then."

Me and Saori are standing back a little to avoid becoming victims of the ongoing anime otaku battle.

We're right outside the Akihabara Washington Hotel on the sidewalk. A crossroad is right in front of us.

...As Kirino's brother, there's something I have to say.

With as much heart as I can put in, I bow down to Saori. "Thank you."

"Oh? Did I do something that deserves being appreciated?"

With a question mark above her head and her mouth in a shape, Saori cocks her head sideways.

She probably understands it. But exchanging any more words about it is just uncool.

I said what I should say. I can only hope she understood my feelings. I smiled lightly.

"You are a good person after all. Kirino and I were lucky."

"I don't understand what you mean at all, but I'm not such a great person. I've been doing whatever I like. If you believe I am so, then it must be that Kyousuke-shi, you yourself are a good person. They say, other people are mirrors showing yourself."

Saying all that, Saori unsheathes the poster from her backpack and thrusts it like a light sabre.

The poster shines in the setting sun. Looking at the tip shown in front of me, I let my shoulders down.

"Heh, Just say whatever."

"And I shall."

Saori smiled and showed her back to me. She must actually make very nice expressions normally. The smile was charming enough to make me believe so.

Thick glasses and a bandana on her head with a plaid shirt tucked into her pants...

It's one hell of an ugly otaku fashion. There's nothing that can be uglier.

Saori swings the sabre once and sheathes it back into her bag.

"Well then, see you again sometime."

The light turns green. Akihabara station shines in the twilight.

The large back walking off showing no hesitation looking proud.

I won't lose to that, and proudly walk towards Kirino.

Character file.04
Saori

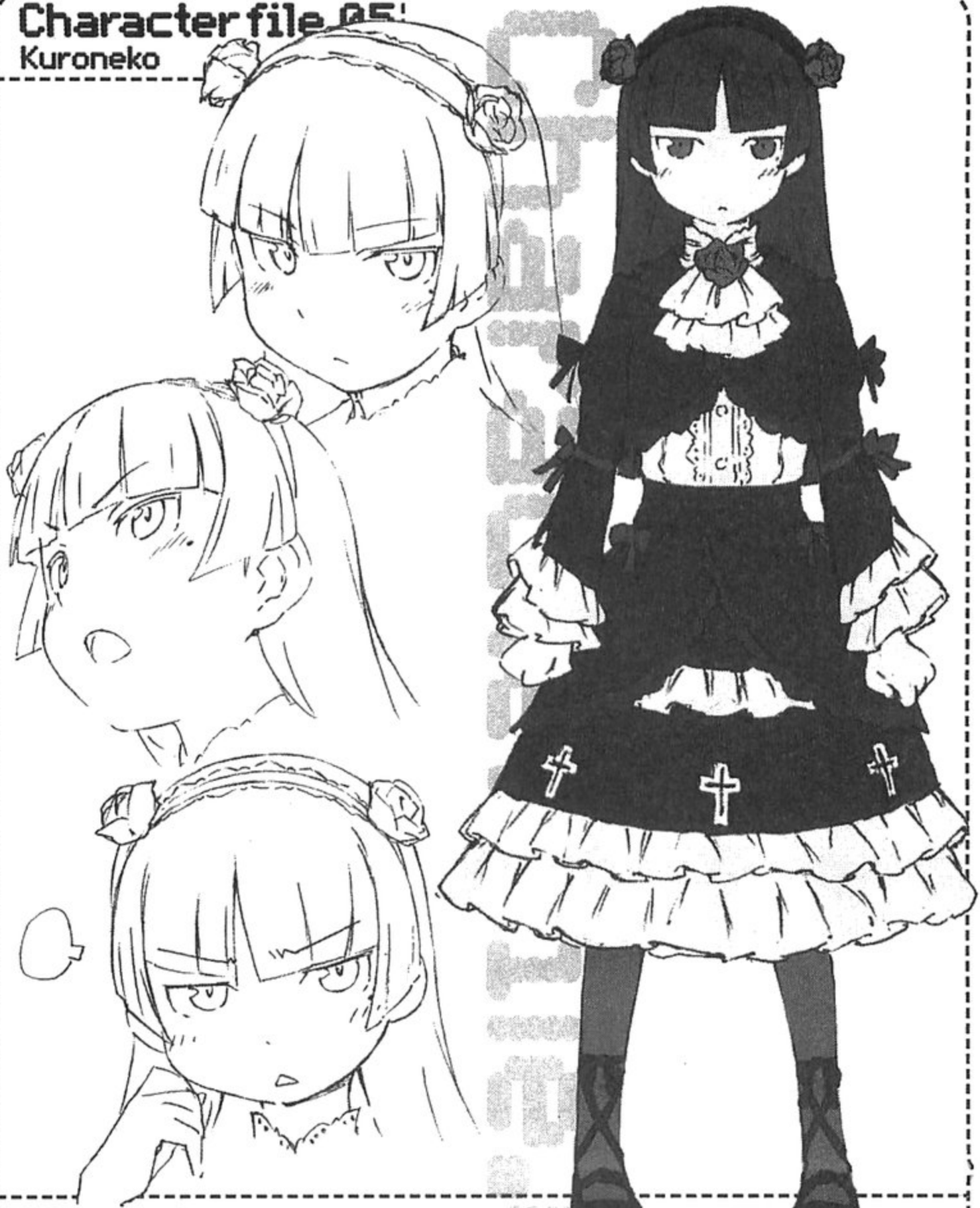
沙織【さおり ハンドルネーム】

◆オタク系コミュニティ「オタクっ娘あつまれー」の管理人。見た目と言動はとにかく変だが、面倒見はよい。

◆性別:女
◆年齢:15歳
◆身長:180cm
◆体重:61Kg
◆3サイズ:88/60/89

04

Character file 05
Kuroneko



黒猫【くろねこ ハンドルネーム】

◆「オタクっ娘あつまれー」のメンバー。クールなゴスロリ娘。言動が刺々しいため、周囲から孤立している。

◆性別:女
◆年齢:15歳
◆身長:160cm
◆体重:43Kg
◆3サイズ:77/53/80

05

第四章

Chapter 4

One night has passed since that offline meeting, and it's after school of the following day.

As usual, I was walking home side by side with Manami.

"And so, these days I sleep while squeezing a teddy bear. It feels so nice!"

"I see." I make half-hearted responses to the slow pace granny talk that my childhood friend makes. That was when she asked in a worrisome tone,

"Hey Kyou-chan... Should we call off studying for today?"

"Oh? I was thinking of going to the library with you like usual. Why do you ask that?"

Did she find out I wasn't really listening? Although that's normal...

Even if that were the case, she would probably express her anger more directly.

Then, was it wrong that I held her up to study three or four times a week even though exams are still far off? Well... That doesn't seem to be the case either.

As I was thinking with a stare, Manami looked down worrisomely,

"Kyou-chan, it's because you looked really tired since morning..."

"Oh, that."

Of course I am. Since yesterday was one of those very rare days in life which were rough for me.

I'm worn down psychologically. Even after the events, Kirino was hissing at me during the entire train ride back home. "What an idiot. What was that for?" "Terrible! It was a complete failure today! Damn! Who was it that recommended to me to go to an offline meeting?" Sure, she was avoided in the offline meeting, and continued fighting the whole time with Kuroneko, though...

She did look like she was having fun. How dishonest can she be?

Being a bit naughty might be cute. But if you have her clicking her tongue for 90 minutes in the seat next to you, you'd only hate her.

"Phew..."

I made another one of the many deep sighs I made today. With my shoulders down, I say,

"Well, a lot of things happened. Surely, I don't feel like studying today... I'm just so tired..."

"Oh really... What a pity... I guess that can't be helped then."

Manami shows disappointment with a gesture exactly like mine. She always smiles with me when I'm happy, and gets gloomy with me when I'm depressed too.

So troublesome for her, since she feels empathy for others. She's too nice to others.

Well, I am thankful for that, in a way, but I won't take the time to thank her now.

"So yeah. Why don't we go out somewhere, today?"

"Huh...?"

Manami looks straight at me like something unexpected happened. Behind her glasses, her little eyes were blinking.

"I was suggesting going out and enjoying ourselves now to raise our spirits, but you don't want to?"

"Oh no, I do want to, absolutely!"

Manami shook her head quickly. Calm down... You're like a puppy greeting your master.

"All right. Do you have anywhere you'd like to go? If you prefer, we can even go to the adjacent city. Are there any movies you want to see?"

"W-Well..."

Manami thinks while continuously changing the position of her glasses. Well, think deeply.

While I was recalling how much I had in my wallet, I was already thinking, "Emptying it this time is fine." It's not wrong to treat my childhood friend occasionally since she's done so much for me.

Don't get me wrong. This is for my own good.

If I keep talking with this carefree girl, some of my stress will be relieved. That's my intention.

"A-Anywhere is fine?"

"Yeah, just name the place."

"Then, I won't hold back,"

Manami proposed with a very loose smile.

"I want to go to the central park."

"Without holding back, you chose the most boring choice of all choices. You chose that, after asking ' Anywhere is fine'?"

Jeez. I feel like treating you, so make some bigger requests.

"Oh, huh? Why are you mad? You said anywhere was fine."

Manami makes a duck face. Yeah I did tell her that, but she's just way too different from those three otaku

from yesterday. If I brought up the same topic, I would have had everything squeezed out of me.

"Well, fine. I'll treat you something to drink at least."

"Wow, thank you! In that case, I'd like some tea. The warm one!"

"Yeah, sure. The usual one, right? Would they still have the warm ones? Spring's over already..."

She's so cheap.

How could you make such a happy smile with only 120 yen?

And so, after 15 minutes or so of walking, we came to the central park of the adjacent city.

This park is quite famous and large. It shows up in tourist maps of this region.

It's a relaxing place with fountains, seats, ponds, bridges and a rose garden.

The fancy western-style building, which acts as a museum, is considered a place of interest.

There's a tree-lined street around the whole area, where the elderly and families with small children take a stroll.

In the spring, the cherry blossoms bloom and this park becomes a great flower viewing spot.

It's a little chilly today, so the hot green tea, which is out of season, isn't so out of season.

"Here's your usual."

"Oh thank you. Itadakimasu!"

rustle From a plastic bag, I took out and opened the hot green tea I bought at the convenience store before passing it to Manami. Manami wrapped it neatly in her handkerchief as she receives the hot tea and carries it carefully. I drink half of my tea and look beside me. Hers is still untouched.

"What's wrong? It's not hot enough to burn you."

"Oh haha... It's nothing..."

Manami is somehow smiling while carrying the tea.

I don't understand at all. I take another sip from my tea and breathe out.

The tea is great. I'm being warmed from the core of my body.

"Ah... It's great... Being like this... I'd like to stay like this for a millennium..."

"Hey... That's a bit too long. What were you in your past life? A bonsai tree for sure."

"That's fine, as long as you take care of me, Kyou-chan."

We continued meaningless talk like that and enjoyed the sun on the bench.

With Manami beside me, I always feel like relaxing on the porch of a home outside the city.

"Ah, I'm getting sleepy..."

It'd probably feel great if I took a nap here... Only if I had a pillow... As I was wondering, I felt my shoulder being grabbed.

"K-Kyou-chan!"

"Huh? What?"

I look back with sleepy eyes. There was Manami, with her hands opened up wide...

Blushing and all nervous, she whispered,

"P-Please..."

...Uhh, what is she talking about?

I don't understand what she means by "please", so I shake my head in puzzlement.

That was when I caught sight of something behind her shoulders.

Oh? Could that possibly be...? I move to the side a bit, and looked more carefully.

"...Kyou-chan?"

"Oh, sorry. What were you saying?"

I go back to looking at Manami. She rolled her eyes.

Uhh... I feel some silent pressure coming from Manami ...

It's like she raging with anger, since her face is red all up to her ears.

Furthermore...

"Your glasses are clouded..."

"Dumb Kyou-chan!"

She quickly looks away. Surprised, I blink my eyes.

"Hey, what are you mad about? It's rare that you are mad."

"Hmph, it's Kyou-chan being insensitive!"

Manami wipes her glasses, still steaming with anger.

After putting her glasses on, she asks,

"That aside, what were you looking at?"

"Oh yeah, look over there."

Manami looks in the direction I pointed. It was an open space where children often play soccer and baseball .

Right now, there are two vans parked.

And...

"What are they doing there? Something like... shooting something for a TV Drama show?"

"Probably. But not a drama show. Look. Those aren't TV cameras. They're using flash. They're taking photographs."

With needless interest, we approach the vans.

From the pathway, we look at the grassy space. Some of the staff were at work, like adjusting the lamps and talking with the model girls.

"I guess they are taking pictures for... a fashion magazine...?"

"By the way, do you read that kind of stuff?"

"Haha... Not really. Whenever I buy clothes, I choose according to the opinion of the store clerk..."

As I thought. Well, I also think they're taking photographs for a fashion magazine.

It looks like they are taking photos with the sunset as the background. Some fancily dressed girls are making many poses and the camera was flashing. Orders from the staff came one after the other, the girls skilfully changed their expression and poses. It's not something simple like just smiling and choosing one pose.

Strictness fills the air.

It's obvious, but modeling isn’t an easy job.

Two girls are being photographed now, but I can see a few more girls who are most likely models standing by. " Wow, look Kyou-chan! That girl is so cute!"

"Yeah really... She is cute."

"Oh? That's a plain reaction."

Umm you see... Even though we aren't dating or anything, when I'm talking with a girl I won't say stuff like "Damn, that girl over there is so cute!"

Wouldn't you find it unpleasant? I guess you don't. You are lacking in the realization that you are also a young woman. Heh... What a difficult feeling I have.

"Look, that brown-haired girl! She's so cute and cool!"

She's so excited. It's not like they are famous actors or anything...

What a commoner, she is.

Heh. I even thought of saying something like "You're cuter than them".

I wonder what kind of face she would make. I make a wicked smile. That was when my sight was naturally locked onto the girl Manami was praising like crazy.

Hmm... The brown-haired girl does look quite nice.

Her legs are long, she's tall, and her face is...

"Isn't that Kirino?!"

"What?!"

Both of us were astonished. It appears Manami, who had no clue about it, was even more surprised than me. She's blinking non-stop, looking at Kirino and then me in turns.

"Err... Umm... Kirino-chan... Is your sister, right?"

"Uhm... Well... I guess so."

"Erm... what do you mean by ‘you guess so?’"

Well, I'm surprised too...

Oh yeah, she said before that she was modeling or something...

It's not that I didn't believe her, but I didn't comprehend it completely, until I saw it with my own eyes like this.

...So it was the truth.

I looked at the brown-haired model once again.

She's sitting in a chair and seems to be talking with staff.

"Oh wow..."

She's doing her job properly along with adults...

I guess I need to re-evaluate what I know about my sister.

I was underestimating her quite much. I didn't consider her seriously.

I thought her modeling thing was just child's play. Like how they get a few praises and get all happy then they have their photograph taken or something...

But...

Kirino was watching the model being photographed with a serious look I have never seen as she talked with staff. At the same time, the makeup artists are quickly fixing her clothes and hair...

The air around the models that were being shot now was glorious.

But around Kirino, who was probably waiting for her turn, the air was tense.

"Phew... It's somehow... great..."

"Y-Yeah..."

I thought they do the shots in a more unserious way, but it sure wasn't. Though I only took a glance at it, so I can't say much, they're getting quite a lot to get their photo taken, so I guess it means it has to be serious.

"...Wow, it's great. It's like they live in some different world..."

"Yeah..."

You don't need to tell me so many times for me to realize. She's a great person, and lives in a different world from commoners like us. I just happened to forget after going out together recently.

Damn it. I don't know why, but I feel annoyed.

"Yeah sure, I don't look like her. She always has looked good at least, so..."

"Oh, no need to be humble. I hear it's not only the looks but she's very smart too"

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

So lame. I'm speaking as if I envy my sister. I regret doing so, but... Manami smiled as if she accepted it. I feel like she's telling me not to mind it.

"My brother's in the same grade as your sister. Though they're in different schools, they had a universal exam. I hear she was on the rankings for the highest scorers in this prefecture."

"Who do you mean?"

"Like I said, your sister. Kirino-chan."

At first, I didn't understand what she was talking about. Then, after thinking about it for a few seconds...

"What? Are you serious? Not only the class, but the prefecture you said?"

"Yes. I hear she's fourth or fifth in the grade. I don't really know the specific rank though... Anyhow, that's what I hear."

She had such great grades? I didn't know at all. Well, I had no interest in my sister up until now and didn't even talk to her so...

I guess it's natural I didn't know, but still it was surprising.

She plays around with kids her age, then she does modeling so seriously like that, and is so into children's anime she can talk for hours about it, not to mention erotic games too...

And she studies a lot?

Heh... That scared me really.

My sister might be someone much more outrageous than I imagined.

I mean in many ways...

A few days have passed. After I returned from school, I met my mother in the living room, as she seemed to have come back from shopping. My mother is humming happily, as she is shoving the goods into the fridge.

I wonder if anything good happened. I ask her with barley tea in hand,

"What's the matter, Mom? You seem quite happy. You need to go get some medical help soon?"

"Oh Kyousuke, Mother hasn't gone insane or anything. Don't worry; it's just that my neighbour praised me, like how your child is great."

"Oh my, I'm blushing. So, what part of me was being praised in the neighbourhood talks?"

"Of course, it wasn't about you."

Yeah, obviously! I did know! Since she added off course to it, I now have a dark feeling of distrust towards my parents! Ha! Look forward to your retirement days!

"Oh huh, then it has to be about Kirino..."

I mutter as I twitch my face. Mother makes a smile like she was waiting for me to ask about it. Well, I didn't ask her anything at all though.

Yeah yeah, sorry for being a good for nothing son. Please continue with your talk about your prized daughter.

"That girl got a great record during her club activities, so she's going to compete in a big competition. It seems my neighbour heard that from her daughter."

"Oh? She does club activities?"

"What? You're her brother and didn't know that? She's on the track and field team. Jeez, you two don't go along at all."

"Leave me alone."

Give me a break will you? Not only does she look great and have good grades, but she also does well in sports?

This is absurd. That's enough. I feel like I'm hearing one of those character settings in manga where they only have good points.

The problem is, this is the truth.

They do exist in reality. These mutant-like beings...

"But does she even have time for club activities? She has to study and play too... She must have many other things to do."

"That's obvious, being good at studies and also martial arts. She maintains both, otherwise Father wouldn't let her. You might not know, but she's modeling for a magazine too!"

"Yeah yeah..."

That's true.

That old-fashioned grump wouldn't allow something like modeling so easily.

Now that I think about it, how she is allowed to dye her hair and put on makeup too...

"That girl made a promise with Father. As long as she does what she should, she's allowed to act freely."

"What she should, eh?"

I make half-hearted responses.

My mother is chuckling,

"Thanks to that, her reception among the neighborhood is so great! She acts nice outside and greets people well. And she looks cute like me right?"

"Huh?"

I scrunch my eyebrows in disagreement, but my mother ignored me completely and continued talking.

This parent and child surely are alike in the aspect about not listening to people.

"She's so popular among the elderly too! Oh, I'm so proud! They envy me so much too!"

"But that's all from the conditions of the agreement she made with Father, right? It's so morally wrong."

"Morally wrong? Who cares about that? As long as we don’t say anything, it's the same. It doesn't change how great Kirino is!"

This is absurd... Is this mother sane or what? Well, this is logical in one sense.

Kirino is trying hard and achieving results to get her demands through.

That has to be recognized. Since it's not something easily done.

At least, it's impossible for me.

"I see..."

But really, every time Kirino comes up as a topic of conversation, she seems to be called great. Don't people need more vocabulary? When I say it, it makes it seem like I'm envious or something though...

But yeah... I never had any interest at all in my sister, so I knew too little of my sister. Still, it's outrageous.

What the heck is she?

As a commoner brother, it's not fun only having your sister praised as great. It feels like your needlessness is being insisted upon. Sad, but true...

As I continued thinking with a complicated face, my mother said something unexpected.

"By the way, that girl seems lively these days. Well, it's a difference only I would notice so maybe no one else would notice though..."

"Huh?"

My eyebrows become even closer, and then she blurted out something completely strange.

"Ah, I got it! It's a boy! Kyousuke, don't you know anything?"

"A boy...?"

"Yeah, she must have a boyfriend now! That's why she's brimming with happiness!"

That's impossible. There's no way a boy who could go out with her exists. If there were such a man, I would admire him as god!

But my mother doesn't seem so, and with even greater excitement, she asks further.

"So, don't you know? Even a bit of speculation?"

"Like I'd know. You know me and Kirino are on bad terms."

I answer like it's obvious, and my mother stares at me with a disappointed face.

"You really are such a useless boy! Be more of a man! Your sister is doing great, so your bloodline should be good enough."

"Heh, since I'm like my mother, being a commoner, I will just study normally,"

I say as I leave. Turning the doorknob, I open the door.

...Kirino looks lively, eh?

...I know something that might have to do with it. Though it's a small possibility, but just possibly...

After being shown the surprising hobby, being dissed like crazy, being forced to play erotic games, being dragged to an offline meeting, and then dragged around Akiba... Maybe the life consultation that seemed so meaningless had some effect.

Haha, it's so not like me... What am I saying? I feel so stupid.

On the night a few days later, I finally completed 'Let's Make Love to Your Sister'.

Honestly, it was a tough, gruesome task...

Well, it's not at the degree of being boring or anything.

I can't count how many times this game almost destroyed my mind.

I was suffering from the pressure of having to play a little sister game while having a real little sister, and it's amazing I was able to get this far. I am impressed with myself. I really am, so happy!

I can't express my happiness! Disregarding my thoughts about the game, I really have a great feeling of achievement.

"Ahhhh!"

What is this? This feeling of high...

From the bottom of my heart, this hot passion is rising.

Because! It means, now, from tomorrow on, I won't be forced to play erotic games anymore... Oh, I'm just so incredibly happy! Banzai! I want to shout aloud! AHAHA AHAHA AHAHAHAHA, I don't need to see the face of this little demon anymore!

"Onii-chan... It's ok..." she whispers, and shed tears of blood... No more of that!

"YAHOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

I'm showing some crazy excitement I haven't showed in years. I can't stop my feelings anymore!

And finally...

The end credits were displayed on the laptop I borrowed from Kirino.

"Phew..."

I breathe out as I was sitting at my desk.

"Phew..."

And then, this feeling of achievement was slowly changing into an empty feeling, and now my heart was hurting. My elevated feelings are now falling rapidly.

I understood for my first time, the empty feeling after fully completing a dating sim is crazy.

Shit, I can't do anything about this... How do you put it ... it's like some enlightened philosopher.

Phew... Why was I so happy a few seconds ago?

"All right, I should go give the game back."

With a silent calm heart, I stand up. I leave my room and then knock on the door to my sister's room.

The door opens slightly, and my sister peeks out.

And as usual, she stares at me like she's looking at trash.

"What do you want?”

"Oh, nothing... Just the game... I came to give it back..."

And she's like this again. Heh... Reality sure isn't like a game. Even after I've gone through Event Scenes, her affection points toward me haven't increased at all. What is this? Is this game too hard or just broken?

As soon as Kirino takes the laptop from me, she asks me with distrust,

"Did you complete it?"

"I did."

"And so...?"

"Uhh..."

Dear sister, why are you looking at me like a mad sergeant?

I can imagine myself being shot if I make the wrong answer. Afraid of her, I answered very carefully.

"Well... I guess... it was so-so. I mean, it was quite interesting."

"Oh? Like what parts? Be clear."

Kirino continues her emotionless questioning.

Heh, so I'm right in the middle of a 'route selection choice' scene in those games...

But the sister in front of me has negative infinity affection points.

That means, if I make the wrong choice, I would lose my life... The problem with the game called life is that there's no saving and reloading... You got only one shot at it. Dead or alive...

Very well. I smiled meaningfully (in my heart).

"Well umm... Shiori's scenario... Uhh, the latter half of it was... quite a good story... Like you see... How the parents oppose their relationship... and then Shiori runs away from the house... and then the main character chases her... and then that scene where they look at each other in the setting sun..."

"..."

Hearing my answer, Kirino closed her eyes and went silent.

So, did I make the right choice or not? My heart is pounding.

Heh... I only summarized the part I was playing just now.

How the heck am I supposed to remember all those scenes that screw my psychological state every click? At least spare my life!

Then, Kirino slowly opened her eyes. With cut eyes seemingly looking down on me...

"W-Well... It seems like you're starting to understand it ."

Oh, wow. It looks like I made the right choice. Phew... As I miraculously survived, I let out a deep breath, and then again, I feel...

How god damn stupid! No kidding! Why do I have to talk to my real sister about little sister games? I tried so hard to get myself out of this! I demand to hear what progress you had on your side!

"But still, you have a long way to go. That wasn't the only good scene. For example..."

"W-Wait a minute!"

I stop Kirino with my hand as she was starting to speak. I try hard to change the topic.

"I'll spend plenty of time listening that later, so let me hear first... How are things going with those people you met at the off line meeting last time?"

"Oh? Yeah... Those people..."

Kirino suddenly made a frown and blankly let me into her room.

"Come in."

It seems she figured out it was bad to continue with this talk in the hall.

"Sure..."

I obey her requests obediently. Kirino puts her laptop on her table and sits on the bed.

She stretches around and makes cracking sounds from her neck, then continued talking as if it didn't matter for her.

"I do talk with both of them still. Like using email and instant messengers."

"Oh, so you've become friends after all."

"I'd rather call them people I can talk to, rather than friends. Since you know... They know the common topics , and sometimes teach me stuff I don't know so... Well, I guess they're of some use."

Hey, that's what you call friends. It seems she seriously doesn't want to use that word.

Though she would call the friends she has when she's pretending to be nice as real friends, why can't she be honest about the friends she has when she's being herself ? Well, it does suit her personality though...

"So you haven't seen them in person?"

"Nope. Looks like that black one lives somewhere close , but the jumbo one seems to live somewhere far so... It's kind of arranged that we meet up again at the next offline meeting so... Well, since there's no better option, I guess I can go."

"Oh I see..."

So she's managing things well.

Since I completed the game, and Kirino has friends who she can talk with her real self.

According to my mother, she seems to show happy expressions so... Oh yeah, ever since that time, she stopped relying on me. It looks like she's going to the next offline meeting alone too.

That means, everything is going fine, and there's no need to consult me.

Oh well...

Now my job is finished for sure. Feeling refreshed, I said.

"Hey Kirino, don't leave your DVDs around again."

"Shut up idiot! I won't repeat such a stupid mistake!"

Who says that? That time, only a little inspection got you freaked out, and a simple trap was all that was needed to catch you. You were too worried so you couldn't act logically at all.

As I'm recalling my memories with a smile, Kirino blushes, and throws a tissue box.

"Oops."

I tilt my neck and dodge. I then just leave the room through the door.

I hear a thud as something hits the closed door.

I guess she will stay being like this from now on. Jeez, what a scary sister...

Well, anyhow, today marks the end of Kousaka Kyousuke's Life Consultation Services Inc.

Yeah, I'll never do it again.

Sunday evening, as I came home from the library, the whole house was silent.

I didn't hear any sounds of cooking, or anything on TV , or anyone talking. Not a single sound was heard.

This isn't normal. As I take my shoes off, I feel an intense sensation, and place my hand behind my neck.

There's this strange tense air. I feel this shock go through my skin.

It's strange. Something's not right.

"...?"

With a serious look, I quietly walk down the hall heading for the living room. I stop at the door. I feel something horrible coming as I touch the doorknob, and hesitate to turn it.

I gulp down some saliva as I open the door.

"I'm... home...?"

Coming in through the door, I see Kirino on the sofa facing my father across a table.

Both of them say nothing. My father is normally silent, and Kirino doesn't talk too much with the family either.

So, a quick glance at this won't reveal what's strange.

But still, it's weird they don't react at all when I entered the living room.

That's not the only something strange. A father and a daughter are sitting right across each other, saying nothing. It's not like they're watching TV, or reading a magazine or anything...

Since my father isn't expressive, I don't know what he's thinking now, but Kirino is all frozen, and looks very disappointed.

And...

"Oh."

I saw what was on the table, and figured everything out.

On the table was two pieces of evidence, as my father would say in his job.

One, was a brand name purse Kirino would often carry along.

And the other thing, there's no way I would forget.

'Stardust Witch Meruru' DVD case containing,

'Let's Make Love with Your Sister (R-18 edition)'.

It's opened up properly. The evidence is clear. No excuses possible. She's guilty.

"...Ahem."

I blinked a couple of times, and understood the situation during that time. I would say what I thought.

WTF IS SHE INSANE????????

IDIOT! HOW FUCKING STUPID IS SHE??? I'm pitying her so much I'm going to cry!

I told her so many times not to let Father find out.

I told her not to leave behind DVDs again! And look what happens!

You repeat dumb mistakes again!

GAH! You made the same mistake you made when you let me find out! Why do you still make these silly mistakes when you're good at everything else! You can't be more careless than this!

Oh man... What are you going to do now? I'm not getting involved with this...

I was trying hard enough not to show a surprised look.

"Kyousuke, hey Kyousuke..."

Mother was whispering to me from the hall as I was frozen at the half-open doorway.

"You stay in your room."

"Oh... Right..."

As my mother pulled me into the hallway, she closed the door to the living room quietly.

"Well... Uhm... What happened?"

I wasn't a great actor.

"Well you see..."

The answer I got from my mother was right about what I expected.

Kirino dropped the DVD case right in front of Father and let him see the contents.

I tried to ask how things happened exactly, but it seems my mother wasn't there when it happened, so she doesn't know. The most probably case I think is like the time I found out too, when we bumped into each other here. If the DVD case opened when it hit the floor, then what kind of coincidence is that? It might have been that Father opened it when he saw the anime DVD case.

Hmm, I can't imagine what kind of expression my father would have had when he saw the R-18 markings...

I guess even my father would have been surprised. Since I was so surprised that I burst out.

"I see..."

Why is Kirino bringing something like that around in the first place?

A few questions arose, but still it's a miraculous situation.

It's not some issue we can easily call misfortune. Maybe this was fated. I'm starting to think so.

"Kyousuke, you don't seem to be too surprised."

"Well yeah. Since I don't care a bit about her."

I was honest. I didn't lie. But my mother asked me the question straight.

"Did you possibly know...?"

"Huh? What about?"

"That... you know... that... that Kirino had that stuff..."

I glance indirectly at my mother who doesn't seem to want to talk of this, and I think.

How should I answer? If I think of my own good, then surely I should lie and fake it.

I couldn't decide, and became silent.

...Jeez. How difficult this is. I find I'm sneering at myself.

I don't care a bit about her. This idea hasn't changed a bit.

What I desire is a normal life.

A common, talentless character in a slow, daily life...

I don’t need rapid unexpected events or unique, special characters in my life.

Kirino is a prime example of that. So, honestly, I don't care. I mean that from the bottom of my heart.

But... The memory of being consulted by her, and going through all the hardships for her was giving me a strange sense of association. And I saw a glimpse of my sister's 'important things' in Akihabara...

Damn, I guess I've gone too deeply into my sister's issue that I can’t just pretend to know nothing.

"Well yeah... I knew."

"As I thought... It wasn't because of you... Was it?"

I knew you'd get to that. Look at how much trust I have. Isn't it sad?

"No, it wasn't. Think before you say something, Mother. I have no computer in the first place. You should know I have no place to hide stuff in my room."

"That's true... Anyhow, no matter how you look at it, that stuff is Kirino's..."

My mother sighs with great disappointment.

I guess she makes such a reaction because she found out her brilliant daughter had that stuff in her possession .

If it was me who got caught by Father with an erotic game in hand, Mother would have been bursting out laughing.

"I haven't seen Father mad like that in a while. At this rate, he won't calm down for quite a while..."

My mother seemed to be thinking for a while, but seems like she thought up of something.

"Kyousuke, I'm going out for a while, so you head for your room."

"What? You're going out?"

"There's no use in staying here. I'll go buy Father's favourite sake. He won't get drunk at all, but if we make him drink loads, he'll become calmer."

My mother was speaking like she was trying to calm an angry spirit or a protective god of the land.

But I understand what you mean. There's nothing scarier in this house than my father throwing thunderbolts.

After my mother went out, I was at the living room door, all afraid for around ten minutes. I would go back and forth in the hall, bite my nails, try to hear what they're talking about, but they seem to be talking with their tones down, so I hear nothing.

What kind of excuse is Kirino making, with her secret hobby revealed?

I can't even imagine, but it's all no use against that father. Father will never change his ideas over things he believes he is right.

And he's abnormally sharp. You should consider that all lies fail to work on him.

When I was very small, I played a prank on a girl and put duct tape on her hair. That girl had to cut some of her long hair to get it off. I didn't think it was anything serious at that time, but when my father found out, he scolded me severely, and shaved both his hair and mine. Then we went to her house to apologize together...

That time, I did admit my wrongdoing, but still I cried and resisted. However, Father didn't listen to me no matter what excuse I made or how much I apologized. He didn't go easy at all on me.

In both the good and bad sense, you can take his word for it, and he will do anything he decided to do.

"Phew... What's going to happen...?”

Behind this door, what kind of conversation is going on...?

I'm a spineless wimp, so there's no way I would know.

It was at least ten minutes after that, when the living room door opened, and Kirino popped out. Kirino looked like a devil, all red and kicking through the door. Her face was red from rage, and her eyes are bloodshot and puffy.

W-What happened...?

"K-Kirino...?"

"Get out of my way! Go away!"

As she stomped on towards me, she looks with me with eyes of hatred, and shoved me away. It's like she has feelings she has nowhere else to release. I wasn't expecting the hit, and lost balance.

Kirino was breathing hard and headed for the entrance hall. She puts on her boots roughly and...

"H-Hey, Kirino, where are you going?!"

"Shut up! It's none of your business!"

"H-Hey wait...!"

I try to catch up with my sister but...

Slam Kirino surely tried to hit me, and closed the door violently.

"Aagh!" My face was caught by the door. "Ugh... Noo... "

As I limped outside, there was no little sister to be found.

... Shit I have to be the most uncool guy ever.

Sob I can't help but sob. GRRRRR My face hurts!

I look ahead at where Kirino ran off while realizing the pain from caught by the door and the misery.

"Damn!"

I shake my head off and try to clear myself. One of the few good points about me is how I recover quickly.

...Should I go after her or not... Wait... before I do that...

I go back inside. Honestly, I had no confidence on doing so; I thought I should ask my father about why and how things turned this way. Without doing so, I'd have no idea why Kirino is all nuts like this.

Of course, I can suspect about the most part.

Besides, she told me she was having an offline meeting with her friends today.

She would meet her friends alone, even without me, and must have spent some nice time together. Like fighting with Kuroneko, making nasty remarks to Saori but her not reacting to it... I can imagine everything... somehow. Since I was watching right beside her the other day.

Kirino is acting lively these days... Ironically, my mother's words came to mind at this moment.

I guess that's because she made friends who she can share the hobby she had been hiding with, right?

I guess she never expected this trap to be there when everything seemed to be going all so well.

I sneak into the living room. My father was somehow cleaning the room with a vacuum cleaner. On the floor there was a crystal ashtray upturned. I guess he's the one who did it.

I hope he didn't rage and throw this at her.

What kind of battle happened here? I gulp.

"..."

My father is cleaning the room silently. In the silent room, only the sound of the vacuum cleaner helplessly resounds. This bad silence after a domestic issue happens is dampening the room.

As my father finishes cleaning, he breaks out in a low heavy voice.

"Kyousuke, you need to sit here."

"Y-Yeah..."

I do as he says, and go towards the table and sit on the sofa.

I guess I'm going to be interrogated about Kirino's issue too. Maybe he's going to scold me.

Kirino has her stubborn side so I assume she hadn't revealed anything about me, but my father can suspect that even without questioning her. It's useless to fake innocence.

That said, I have no intention to reveal Kirino had consulted me about this issue. That's the right attitude one should take as being consulted.

I look up at the table. The proof material, the open DVD case is inside. Right next to it, I find a single piece of paper.

"This is..."

It seemed to be some ad from an anime/manga speciality store. It had a big illustration of Stardust Witch Meruru on it and next to it said this:

Stardust Witch Meruru Volume 2 (limited first issue edition) finally in-store! Those who bring the package for the previous volume will be given an autographed postcard by Hoshino Kurara, the popular voice actor!

...I get it. This will answer many of the questions I had.

The reason why Kirino was trying to bring out the package of Stardust Witch Meruru when she was supposed to go play with her non-otaku friends.

The reason why she brought this package out today, it must have been that she wanted to get this Hoshino Kurara autographed postcard.

It's not that much effort, so she could have just gone already. But out of all the times she could have chosen, she had to do it today... What bad timing.

Now I figured how Father found the thing, and that it was in the evening after Kirino came back from the event . I'm quite sure it was like this. Kirino came back home once, returned to her room, and now she went off trying to get the post card, but crashed into Father... I can imagine how things turned out easily.

Although I can't imagine how things turned out after that, but anyhow he found the contents, and then a family meeting was held... I can only describe this as miserable...

So...

As Father finishes putting away the vacuum cleaner, he sits in front of me.

I get nervous, like an instinctual reaction, and straighten up. The first words Father spoke were like this :

"Kyousuke, you knew about it?"

"...Yeah."

I had no other choice but to answer honestly. My father's eyes have been sharpened through the years to get those criminals to talk. Don't use them on your son... What if I pee my pants?

"All right. I won't ask how you found out. I assume you aren't supposed to say."

Not only are my father's eyes scary, he seems to see right through into my heart.

"..."

How much does he see into the accomplice relationship between Kirino and me? I feel shivers down my spine.

"I will not buy this kind of stuff for you two. Do you know why not?"

My father picks up the DVD case by one hand and speaks of the contents with prejudice. Only the DVD inside is R-18 stuff, but I don't think he would be able to differentiate between them.

Unable to talk back, I stay silent. I look down, trying not to see my father eye to eye.

When Father scolds us, we both become like this.

"It's because this kind of stuff has negative effects on you. You see in the news too, right? Playing video games makes you stupid. They report how they find perverted comics and games in the houses of criminals... Of course, I don't take what the media says word for word but still... "

...It's just harmful stuff anyways. My father's expression says so.

My father's understanding of sub-culture is unbelievably low, and he looks at Kirino's hobby with the 'responsible respectful adult figure' lens filter.

...My understanding of otaku weren't much different from that of my father until recently.

Since my parents would never have bought stuff like games which were unaffordable with our allowances, unlike CDs and comic books.

I just had stronger prejudice to sub-culture than ordinary high school students.

Games are useless, and only idiots play them. Therefore, I'm not envious at all even if I don't have them ...

That's the kind of logic I had. The kids with parents who don't buy them games derive at that logic.

And I guess that's exactly why Kirino had the deep inner conflict with herself.

"Regardless of whether it is a fact or not, what do you think of people who play that stuff, even if it's said to

have negative effects? And those otaku who only play that stuff... Of course, they would be looked down on. If so, then there has to be no good effect. Thus, we would never buy that stuff for you."

"...But you know, that was..."

I barely try to talk back to Father, but he overlaps and continues speaking.

"You're going to say she bought it with her own money, right? Well, that's true. So I do not say much against what she buys on her own money. Like cosmetics , flashy clothes, bags... Honestly, I think that stuff that isn ’t fit for her age should be off limit for her too. But if she gets her mother on her side and claims she needs that stuff to have relationships with friends, then I can't say anything more. I have to give up and let her do as she wishes."

"So you're saying cosmetics and bags are fine, but games and anime are not?"

"Of course not. I can't let Kirino have that kind of stuff that's considered bad by society. And while it's strange

for me to say so, she's quite a good girl. If she's going astray following strange hobbies, I have to correct her before she becomes completely ruined."

So otaku hobbies will ruin Kirino, and thus he must stop her... That summarises his intentions.

Truth is, with Kirino becoming completely obsessed with little sister genre erotic games, she sure is becoming spoiled as a junior high school girl, so I had to keep quiet about that for now.

So...

As soon as he finished scolding me, he stands up and tries to leave the living room.

I felt a chill go down my spine.

"F-Father, where are you going?"

I hurry to catch my father and try to stop him, as he tried to go up the stairs.

Above the stairs, there are only two rooms: Kirino's and mine. No way, he can't be...

My father's lines spoke exactly what I feared.

"I'm going to check Kirino's room. She might be hiding something else."

"W-Wait, could you please wait?"

Shit! Kirino's collection is in there...

I look up at my father from down the stairs and shout out to stop him.

"If there really are that stuff, than mother would have found them. She does clean the room everyday after all... She found all the porn books I hid too... Of course, she has nothing else to hide. I'm sure she put everything she had in her hand bag."

Kirino must have claimed so too. Why? Because if Father finds other stuff like erotic games and the sort, no doubt my father will throw them all out. Even if it were going to be a one-on-one death match between Father and her, she would surely defend her collection.

"And that's why I'm going to check. If I do a search and still find nothing, then that's good."

Uhh you will surely find stuff... That's officially your job...

If I let Father into her room, then her entire collection will be found.

And I can be sure, take my word for it, he is underestimating the extent of Kirino's hobbies.

I'm not trying to be evil or anything... just call off the search! You're better off not seeing it! It's not only two or three erotic games that she has!

Since I saw at least 20 or 30 the last time she let me see!

And there are ones she said she was still embarrassed to show me stuffed in the depths of that closet... If my father sees that stuff, he might go insane...

Th-This is bad. Seriously bad. Reality still looks lukewarm compared to the situation that awaits...

"W-Wait a second, Father!"

Father is continuing up the steps with thumping sounds. I hurry up behind him, and go in front of him and spread my arms, blocking him.

"Out of my way, Kyousuke!"

"I-I won't move!"

What am I saying?! Am I insane?! If I go against my father now...

"OUCH!!!!"

My father easily twists my wrist and repeats what he said.

"Out of my way!"

My father still tries to let me give the way on my own intention. He can easily throw me away and get through with force. With the pain in my wrist causing tears, I tell him,

"I won't move!"

GRIPPING SOUND

The pain in my wrist just got stronger. He's a professional at efficiently giving pain.

"Grr..."

It hurts so much! Seriously, what the hell am I pulling?!

I don't understand myself at all!

"Whatever the reason is, it's still wrong to do a house search without the resident's permission... Even if you are the parent, there are things you can do and things that are still wrong. And so, I won't move."

I insist, withstanding the pain.

It seems like I was trying to defend my sister's collection.

Even though I don't give a damn about what happens to her...

Even more, it's the father's job to scold a daughter if she has inappropriate things.

Father is only trying to do his obvious duty, and if Kirino is going to cry as a result, it's her own fault.

Then why am I doing such a futile, fruitless deed, going through all this pain?

Well, of course... I did get the consultation, while it went strangely... And her face as she was proudly showing off the collection to me just came back to my mind. That's why.

I just remembered myself trying to want to do something for her, as she forced me to play erotic games and kept asking my thoughts about it.

And then that huge fight at first sight they had in the McDonald’s at Akiba, the fun looking otaku, I witnessed myself, and they made me realize, they aren't anything to look down on at all.

That's why I'm doing something so off from my style...

"Father, just leave this to me... I'll have a talk with her. So please, give her time until then. Isn't it pitiful to have all your precious stuff thrown out while you were away by someone without any acknowledgement?

I'm begging you please."

As I plea as hard as I can, Father looks at me with suspicion.

"You..."

Sure, I know what you feel like saying, Father. Why would someone like me be going through all this trouble to defend my sister who I'm on bad terms in, right? Well, it does seem strange, I admit it.

However, I'm the one who understands the fact the most!

"..."

We stared at each other silently for a while. He seemed to have been thinking of something with a stern face but...

He let go of my wrist eventually.

"Fine. I'll wait. I won't go into Kirino's room."

My father will never break his promises, no matter what.

"But the deal is that you are responsible for throwing them out. All of them! Okay?"

"Got it... I'll talk with Kirino, and surely make it happen."

I had no choice but to answer so. From what he said right before, you could see he is confident there are ' things that mustn't be there' in Kirino's room.

Though there was no better option to choose, it was like I was shouting aloud that she had stuff in there, by resisting the search so hard...

If I break this promise, Father will surely not forgive me. It's no exaggeration to say that he could kill me. It's a man-to-man promise after all.

Throw out every piece of that collection... I must give that sentence to my sister...

Not only is it a huge responsibility, it's extremely difficult, and a reward less mission!

This is surely not my style. Like I'd continue with this...

Jeez, hey Kirino... I did buy you some time...

So appreciate it... You probably won't, will you...?

After managing to halt my father, I left the situation to my mother as she came back from shopping, and went out to go search for Kirino. However, I've not a clue about where she might have gone, after dashing out of the house.

In the sunset, I run off without direction.

You think I should call her up on her phone? Like hell I'd know that... I've no clue what her mobile number is.

Didn't you hear what my mother said? Us siblings are really on bad terms. Kirino hates me like I'm some piece of crap. I ignore my sister as if she has nothing to do with me.

We have no conversation. We don't see eye to eye... A cold relationship between complete strangers, that's what our relationship is like.

That's why I don't know her number, and don't even want, or need to know it.

"Damn it, where could she have gone?"

But I find myself searching for that complete stranger and running all around town.

The park, the shopping arcade, school, the station... My sister that would stand out with her beauty is nowhere to be seen.

Not here either... Damn it! Where the heck is she?!

I insist that the irritation that burns my heart doesn't come from worrying for her.

I don't know where the frustration comes from, but I'm doing something that is not like myself. I guess that's why it feels so strange. Is it that which makes me so frustrated?

"I don't get it. Am I stupid or what?"

This is so not me. Seriously... Oh, damn it. God damn it, shit!

Oh whatever. No use thinking. It's needless!

"Who cares?"

I gulp down this chaotic feeling, bite hard, and keep running.

Like the main character in one of the little sister games which I borrowed from my own sister, I, Kousaka Kyousuke, am running off in the sunset, in search of his own sister who ran off. In his mind, there is nothing but thoughts about his CUTE sister.

The only thing different from the game is that my sister's affinity level is at minus infinity...

And unlike that sister complex bastard, I fucking hate my goddamned sister!

Even though we're doing the exact same thing!

Kousaka Kyousuke in the game would find the little sister he was searching for in the orange coloured city.

Right in front of the exhausted main character, the little sister is supposed to appear at the best timing.

Well, that only happens in games.

In reality, the scene where I found my little sister was far from that typical romantic place you've always seen it kind of setting.

In the shopping arcade, in front of the station during the evening, as I was about to go past the game center...

"Oh..."

A brown-haired girl that resembled someone I knew was smashing the sticks on a drum game as if she was blaming the game for all the rage. She was completely ignoring the rhythm and music and just going WHACK WHACK WHACK!

Are you trying to total it?

"Ouch..."

I can't help whispering.

That idiot! I was going through all this trouble looking for you... I'm getting a headache...

Well, this is reality. Yep, things don't get pretty like you've seen in fiction.

"Die! Die! Die! Die! EVERYONE DIE!"

She was murmuring something and when I wondered what it was, that was what it was... What a violent woman she is...

I approach Kirino with a strangely powerless sensation , as she continues to inflict damage to the game machine.. .

I softly hit the back of her head.

"No, you die."

"Wh-Who?!"

SWOOSH Kirino swings her sticks as she looks behind. Again, I get hit in the face.

"Ack!"

"Oh what, it's you again."

Damn you! You just smacked without even checking who the target was?! What if I were the shop staff trying to teach you how to safely play that game?! Damn you! You really must be raging!

But Kirino's attitude didn't look like it was someone who'd been repeating "Die". Her face, her voice, they were all horribly dark.

"...What are you here for?"

"What you ask? You went running off, so I've been searching for you..."

"...Disgusting. What's with you? Quit getting games and reality mixed up."

I guess she's trying to say, I'm not going to fall for you or something. Well that's fine. Since I'm going to dump you anyways. I understand even better after playing the little sister games.

Little sisters in 3D are seriously needless!

All of you brothers out there who have some annoying little sister will surely agree with me.

Jeez, what was I thinking of doing after finding her? Bah, I don't even remember.

"Shut up! But hey, be thankful of me at least."

"Huh? What the heck? Why should I thank you?"

"It was hell after you left you know... Like how Father tried to get into your room and..."

"Wait, what?!"

Kirino opened her eyes puffy from all the crying wide, and held me by the neck. Hey, you're strangling me to death!

"...You DID stop him, right?"

The heck? Why are you speaking like it's natural that I stop him? I'm you older brother, not your servant. I hope you understand that already.

"Oh yes ma'am. I did stop him, sacrificing myself."

"Good."

Well done, doggy. That's how she said it like. Though I do have some blame for it, I still feel like my dignity is shattered. As Kirino releases me, she holds her arms and looks at me with a complicated expression.

"Let's go somewhere else. We're standing out here."

We moved to a Starbucks nearby.

Though it's early summer now, it's starting to get darker.

In plain clothes, Kirino and me sit on across a little round table and drink coffee.

There seems to be quite a few guests, like college student looking boys and people in business suits looking like they are back from work. At this hour, there aren't any middle schoolers and high schoolers who're going home after club activities.

Considering the other customers, how do people around us look at us?

We haven't spoken a word ever since so...

Kirino was carrying an aura of anger, and is staring at me with bloodshot eyes...

A couple in crises, and the reason was me having illicit relationships with other girls... I hope the people around don't look at me like that...

Since the silence was killing me, I started talking without much thought.

"So, Kirino."

"...What?"

"What are you going to do from now on?"

Kirino takes a sip from her coffee with a puffed up face and murmurs.

"I don't know..."

Of course you don't. If she goes home, she would meet Father. How would she know what to do?

And Kirino continued by asking me, as expected. " What do you think I should do?"

This was the second time hearing that line from my sister's mouth.

I can’t ever call myself a dependable brother, yet she still has to depend on me. That just shows how troubled, and option less she is. It's just like last time.

So I can't say "Not my problem." even if I believe so.

The part about Father telling me to throw every single piece of it out, I will keep silent for now. My father's words are the golden law in the family. How would she feel if she found out her precious collection was handed a confirmed death sentence?

Heh, it's just more trouble to have her get mad here. I guess it's better to ask her more and as much as I can for now.

"By the way, there's something I want to ask you before we start. Okay, Kirino?"

"What...?"

"What did Father tell you? It looked as if you were having some long talk."

From how my father was when speaking with me, he probably didn't tell you to throw it out...

This was a question to find out what Kirino's current standing was.

"H-Hey... Kirino..."

My mind went blank for a second after seeing Kirino's unexpected reaction.

"...!?"

The moment she heard my question, her cheeks went red, and started shaking.

She held her chest with one hand, and with the other hand, she's holding a fist on the table.

Her cute face is a mess. I quickly stopped looking at her, but I can clearly imagine her enormous rage storming in her heart.

Rage, hatred, and slight feeling of giving up...

So mortified, mortified, mortified, mortified, but also sad...

I can feel this strong directionless emotion.

What happened in the living room that time and what they talked about I would not know yet.

But, I sensed there must have been something that would have made Kirino change like this.

"He..."

I heard a whisper like a black mist come out of my sister's mouth as she kept looking down.

I go on to ask what she said, with so much fear, and Kirino slammed on the table.

SMACK

"He called it stupid, all my favourite anime and games! Even the offline meeting I had today! He called it stupid, everything, everything, everything, all of it! It's not! It isn't anything like that at all... But I... I couldn't..."

Here onwards, it was mostly her sobs and cries that I couldn't hear much.

Kirino is sobbing in the same position as she continues to have her fist on the table.

"You weren't able to say anything back, you mean?"

"...No..."

Droplets of tears fell onto the table.

I understand her after going with her life consultations for a while.

Kirino had something to rage about today. Someone had tarnished her precious thing, which I saw a hint of that time.

That's why she is so angry. She is mortified and is crying.

It might be wrong to compare, but even I have my precious things.

If someone just denies it, saying it's stupid, I'd surely go nuts and get angry too.

I'm definitely sure about it. Let it be my father or who ever, I'll be beating them up. Or else I won't be satisfied.

Kirino must feel that way too.

"I... I couldn't say anything back... I... grabbed and tried to go hit him with the crystal ashtray, but he subdued me... So mortifying..."

Uhh... So you tried to take a blunt object to hit him with by instinct? How violent. I didn't really hear much, but such a battle was going on there...

I cancel my previous thoughts that she must feel like me!

She won't just beat up someone... She would murder them... surely...

"Here Kirino, use my handkerchief."

"Oh no, my makeup is a mess..."

I lend her my handkerchief, and Kirino wipes her face. She leaves her seat, and takes a break.

Re-makeup time. We calm ourselves down, and start again. It's for both her and me...

"Phew..."

Hey, you guys, what do you think you're looking at, huh? I look around, and smash away the eyes of curiosity .

What a relief that it was this hour. None of our classmates would witness the conversation we had just now.

After finishing off the coffee that had gone all cold now, Kirino came back makeup-less.

She sits softly across me.

...I'd definitely never tell her this, but doesn't she look cuter without makeup?

Since I got into thinking about unrelated stuff like that,

"Hey..."

"H-Huh, Wh-What?!"

I was caught by surprise as she suddenly talked to me.

Kirino without makeup asked me with a weak tone.

"Am I... weird...? Is it wrong... to like that stuff...?"

"Kirino..."

With eyes all puffed up from the crying, she asks me that. What am I to answer...?

"Of course, Father would say it's wrong. It's not because my father is more strict than average. A normal parent would surely say so. That's obvious, and you should know that. You know that, since you couldn't publicly show your interests because of how people around consider that stuff."

"But... still... it's already public..."

"Yeah, so it's too late. We can't cry over spilt milk."

With all the sincerity I can show, I say aloud,

"So you must make a choice."

I stopped talking here, and looked my sister in the eye.

"You're telling me to stop this hobby...?"

"If you could do so, things would all be settled. If you quit being an otaku, then there's no problem. Father will quit being angry, and you won't have a time bomb in you that may explode and screw your public image.

I heard many rumours about you recently... Like how great you are, sports, studies, and you're a fashion model , and you do great in club activities too... That's amazing. I really do think so. So if you didn't have that hobby we're talking about, you're flawless. You know where I'm getting to right?"

"Yes... I know very well myself that I'm amazing. If I quit being an otaku, everything will go well... I already knew that from the beginning."

This time, Kirino lightly hits the table with a fist and calmly says...

"But I won't quit it. That's because... I love it... I really love it! Quitting it even when I love it... I don't want to... I just can't..."

"I see, but your father doesn't seem to care about how you feel about it. Bad things must be corrected... He told you countless times already, right? Regardless of how much you like it, Father thinks of it as a 'stupid hobby that's not desirable'. He will force you to give it up, and we can't do anything to resist that."

"But still-!"

Kirino shouts with a serious face. It's the expression that moved me that other day.

"I will not quit! I will not quit things I like! I've told you before. They're both part of me. If one of them is lost. .. If I give one of them up... I won't be myself. Of course, I'm a child and should listen to what Father says. That's how children are supposed to be and can't resist that. But still... Having them, all thrown away... all lost... that make it so that the me until now will have never existed.. . So I will never quit having love for it!"

...And so that's what she said.

Even if she gets her whole collection thrown out, even if she gets her cell phone and computer thrown out, even if she loses connection to the internet...

She still claims to continue being an otaku. She never will quit, since she loves it...

If one or the other disappears, then she won't be herself...

"...All right."

You're an idiot... You seriously are one. I can't believe how stupid you are, idiot.

Are anime and manga that important? Do you have to be that stubborn and defend it? I don't understand you. Not at all. Even though it's absolutely not a hobby you can be proud of, you still treat it so importantly, enjoy it, meet up with friends to talk about it, and have fun over it ...

Jeez... Are all otaku like this...?

Then it seems like it's as I guessed.

"Not bad."

"Huh?"

As my sister looked with a puzzled expression, I made a sly grin, and told her...

"I said, it's not bad, and that's my answer to the question you had before."

What's gotten into me? I'm weird today... Uhh... Rather I've lately have been... If I were my usual self, well... like

me last month, I would have had not a speck of a chance that I would think of stopping Father like that.

I wouldn't have imagined of going looking for my terrible sister that I could care less about.

And hearing the painful statement from my sister, I would not have felt this way...

I click my tongue, and stand up, with a strangely clear feeling.

"Kirino..."

I look up into my sister's face, and with my thumb, I point at my own face.

"Leave it to me."

In my 17 years of my life, I've never said anything more unfitting than this.

It's as if I'm her brother.

...What the hell am I saying? Am I stupid or what?

As I hurried home, I was developing so much self-hate .

I've left Kirino in the store, telling her to come home after an hour. I just told her without waiting for her response, so I don't know if she would follow my orders.

Whatever her choice is, she would not come home until she feels ready to do so.

So before she does, I'm going to have my talk with Father.

"Heh..."

You're fine to laugh at me.

I agree that I'm an idiot. I really am an idiot...

How could I just go "leave it to me?" How embarrassing! Getting so caught up in the moment...

I can feel my face blushing. Plain people like me shouldn't try to be cool!

Now I will be having an unmatched fight with father.

The only future I can see coming is being crushed easily and getting my head shaved bald.[18]

But, hell! I have no other choice!

"Throw out everything in your room. Quit being an otaku!"

How could I tell her that?

After knowing how she feels, I won't allow anyone to say that to her! Even if that is my father!

...Sure, I freaking hate my damn annoying little sister.

I don't need non-average characters like her in my life. Since she seems to hate me too, we can just get things sorted and start ignoring each other.

That point seems to have not changed though.

She means nothing to me. She seriously is meaningless .

Do you find something wrong here? You think I'm contradicting myself?

...Who knows? Even I don't know what I'm doing now.

I'm being sincere about every bit of it, yet there might be something there that I haven't realized within myself... I haven't figured out what the identity of this feeling coming within my heart is...

Yeah, so there's only one thing I understand.

While Kirino has never called me this before...

I'm her older brother.

Even if I hate her like hell and don't give a shit, and she's only annoying to me...

I have to help my sister.

Don't you think so too?

Thirty minutes later, I was in front of the living room door.

There's a secret plan hidden in the bag I carry in one hand. While running home, I thought up of this with my less than adequate mind. Having my mother help, I

somehow got the needed stuff prepared. As a finishing touch to this, I told Mother not to enter the room. All is prepared.

But honestly... There's no guarantee that things will go out well. There's a much higher chance that he will just deflect it away without any effect.

"Heh..."

But I'm still going to do it. It's not for my little sister, but for myself, since I decided to do so.

Damn it, I'll do what I have to!

With renewed high spirits, I opened the living room door.

A pungent smell of alcohol... It's like how Minamoto no Yorimitsu would have felt when he arrived at the Shutendouji's mansion. (!)

Father was sipping sake from an ochoko[19]. As soon as he spots me coming in, he gives me a glare.

"Kyousuke, what happened to your greetings?"

"U-Uhh... I'm back!"

No way, no way! This is just crazy! What's with his incredible presence!

He has a yakuza face when he's normal, and now with all the anger, he has an even more demonic face.

I thought I was getting high spirited. Now I have none.

I can't stop my skin from shaking. I feel the saliva going down my throat. I slowly approach Father. I couldn't dare to stand in front of Father...

I was praying that he wouldn't look this way, yet stand beside him, about three meters away.

You think I'm a wimp? Heh, newbies know nothing. If you try standing here yourself, you would understand.

It's like having some crazy hungry monster right next to you making growling sounds. I don't even want to take one step closer.... You see, I'll tell you now but... I'm already teary eyed.

"Father, I have something I need to talk with you about ."

I tried hard to stop my voice from shaking, and started talking.

Father didn't answer me, and took a sip from his sake.

"Did you find Kirino?"

"Yeah... I had a talk with her."

"And...?"

He doesn't even give a glimpse at me, and urges me to continue. Honestly, I'm thankful he didn't. Though in the end, I'll have to look him in the eye, and persuade him. I still wanted to avoid that for now.

Since I'm scared...

"..."

The air became tense. It's strangely hot, and difficult to breathe. Still I can't stop myself from shivering.

I was sweating profusely from my face, droplets started to fall from my chin.

"And...?"

He urged me to speak with the same words. I open my mouth with a similar feeling to jumping off a cliff.

"I want you to recognize Kirino's hobby."

The moment I said that, was it just me imagining this, or did the room become completely silent?

The only thing I can hear is my heartbeat and heavy breathing.

"Kyousuke,"

With a deep emotionless voice, his response came.

"I told you back there, ‘You are to throw them all away with your own responsibility’ And you answered, "I understand. I will talk with Kirino, and surely make that happen." Did you not?"

"Yes I did."

"Do go by your words."

He says shortly, and went silent. Sure... what Father said was correct. There's no doubt, I'm in the wrong.

But you see... I can't retreat here.

"I cancel that."

"So you're saying you are going to break a promise you made? When did I teach you to do so?"

Every single word of my father resounds deeply. I bit my lip and with a huge voice I shout,

"Fuck that shit! I'm not going to force her to give up that hobby of hers, and won't throw out the stuff she's hiding either! Even if I'm going to defy logic, there's no way I would! Listen carefully Father, I'm going to tell you why I arrived at that conclusion."

"Go ahead... My parent teachings to you can wait."

Aagh. I kicked into talking well, but in reality, I'm seriously crying!

I can't see my face now, but if I let him see my pitiful face like this, he will surely not listen to my excuse.

He'd rather slam me away before I start. Good move there by me, not standing in front of him!

Heh, newbies! This is what I call pro!

...Okay enough with making me look even more pitiful . I wipe my face with my T-shirt.

"Sure, Kirino has hobbies different from ordinary little girls. That means however, that she would not have friends she could share that hobby with, among her ordinary friends."

Taking a short pause here, I continue.

"That's why she tried to find friends she could share her hobby with. And so... She searched around, and somehow managed to find some... and progressed as far to meeting them for her first time."

"..."

Father is drinking sake at a much faster pace, and silently continues listening to what I have to say. I'm speaking now without any regard to saving myself. It's not much of a surprise if he already decided to hand me the death sentence.

This silent pressure is just devastating. Well, thinking in Father's perspective, it must be a nightmare today.

His precious little daughter reveals she actually is in love with erotic games...

So he tries to move her into the right direction through a good scolding, but that ends when he almost gets murdered with a crystal ashtray.

Even worse, the needless son comes out, and speaks junk in defence of that unadvisable hobby...

Sure, he'd go into heavy drinking. I'm sorry. I really do feel sorry for you from my heart.

You surely would like to punch me now, but bear with me for a little longer.

"Well, that was just some while ago. Today, with those friends she made that time, she had an offline meeting together... Uhh, it's a meeting among those with the same hobby. You heard about it, right?"

"Yeah..."

"And after hearing that, you told her it was stupid. You told Kirino, who tried so hard to make friends, the effort was stupid... What the fuck was that for? You

knew nothing about her! Don't go thinking you're god or whatever!"

I let out all I had in place of my sister who was miserable and mortified because she wasn't able to say anything.

This wasn't supposed to be my feelings... It should have meant nothing for me, yet I was angry, from the bottom of my heart.

It was already something important for me, without me realizing it.

"I saw with my very own eyes the ‘things that are precious’ to her. I've met the people who share the same values. Sure, they may deserve to be seen with prejudice. They are weirdoes after all. They speak strangely, and dress weirdly... Honestly, I thought I would never understand them. But still..."

What I saw back there flashes back, and so do my feelings as I saw them...

"I thought to myself, it's not bad, since they seem to be having hell of a nice time. They started a loud argument the very day they met and made a mess. How much

could they love that stuff? It's nothing ordinary to get that seriously mad about that stuff, both Kirino and the other people I mean. They were that absorbed into the stuff! It made me, the bystander, become embarrassed! But you see, as they were arguing, they were already comrades, they were such good friends they can speak without being reserved!"

I wouldn't have imagined myself doing something so warm blooded like this until recently. I'm still surprised at every word I speak.

I never thought I was this hot tempered. Living a normal, commoner, average, lazy life... That was my policy.

And I haven't changed that now either.

However, something in me has changed between the me a little while ago, and the me now.

After being consulted by her, and helping her with a lot of stuff, after seeing a lot of stuff I never thought of watching, after being affected by her... It was I, who changed.

I don't want to admit I was being affected by those weirdoes and stuff I can't understand, but it's still reality.

I have to accept that.

I received something through them, and changed, into an idiot, into some embarrassing person.

That's why, even with eyes filled with tears from fear,

I can still go against this fearful father like this.

"Of course, I can't understand their hobby at all. But still! Is it that wrong to be absorbed in stuff? That stuff is important! Right? You can't just simply discard it like that!"

"So you're telling me to let her be? Let her continue with that stupid hobby that only has negative effects to her?"

Father stood up and looked into my face. His look, 100 times scarier than Kirino, pierced my heart.

I'm about to pee my pants. I should kneel down and ask for forgiveness.

"You called it a stupid hobby that only has negative effects...?"

This is my chance. I'm ready to use my trump card! I close up to Father and throw the contents of the bag out in front of him. Bang! First, I slam Kirino's grades in front of Father.

"Look at these incredible grades! She's within the best five of this prefecture. I hear it wasn't just this time either . You should know best how her grades have always been."

"What does that have to do with anything? Kirino is keeping the promise we made. No big deal. That's why I allow her to dress up so flashy like that. I even let her be a fashion model."

"There's more!"

What I hit him with were countless trophies and awards.

The newest one was from a track and field tournament last year.

"This, that, this one too... Look at them! All of them say either number two or champion! These are from her grade school years! These are from her preschool years! Why the heck does she have this many? I'm surprised after I actually gathered them up! Look, Father! Your daughter is this amazing!"

"I know that. What does that have to do with anything ?"

"What does that have to do with anything? I'm saying you're being too anal! She's that smart, and that good at athletics, and has so many other skills... She's such a great daughter unlike me! She has much to be admired about! What's wrong for her to have one strange hobby? That should be acceptable! Can't you be lenient? Just because you find something you don't like about your proud daughter, you scold her like crazy, you make her cry, and then you make her throw away stuff important to her? That's pathetic!"

"I call that parenting!"

Damn it! I try persuading with impulse, but Father doesn't seem to budge.

However, this isn't the end yet! *BAM* I slam a thick book in front of him.

"...Kirino's album? What does that have to do with anything?"

Father started to speak in a slightly softer tone. In the gorgeous thick album, there are scores of photos of Kirino starting from when she was born until now. A photo of Kirino sleeping in the baby bed, a photo of mother carrying her in her arms... A photo of her getting the main part in the preschool play, her Shichigosan[20] photo, a photo of her preschool graduation, her grade school entrance photo, a photo of her winning in the athletics meeting... etc etc...

Of course, Father, with his super expensive professional class camera, took them all.

Damn, there is no photo of me...

"Kyousuke... What are you trying to say?"

"Don't be in such a rush."

WHAM I smack another, thinner book. I can see Father's face become blue.

"...?!"

"I asked Mother to let me borrow this. I hear this is a treasure to you."

What I showed to Father was a scrapbook. Inside, are clippings from a teen magazine. Our well-known brown-haired model is wearing the newest trendy clothes and proudly making a pose.

There are many photos, covering countless pages.

There was a complete collections of photos ever since Kirino made her debut, all neatly filed...

Of course, I'm not a parent yet, so I don't understand how a father feels when he has a daughter.

But you see, I can imagine it.

"You must have been happy, eh? You keep saying you're not amused, but you buy the magazines that Kirino's photos are in, and trim her photos only and collect them..."

"...Quit the nonsense! I need to know and check up on my daughter's job!"

The way he tries to make excuses... I guess they are related by blood after all, Father and Kirino...

"So, after you checked, what did you think about it? Was it some harmful, unfitting job like you were prejudiced against?"

I continue on talking as I flick through the pages of the scrapbook.

"It wasn't, was it? Because if it were, you wouldn't be collecting all her work and considering it your treasure, would you?"

This tense sensation like walking on a tightrope... Our eyes, meet. It's so scary, but I won't step down, or look elsewhere.

Father finally released a deep breath.

"I am not in any position to comment about that job of hers. Although I still do have my objections to how she's dressed..."

"Then, what are your thoughts about this?"

I take the last photo I have from my chest pocket.

"!"

In the photo were the three: Kirino, Kuroneko and Saori.

I heard Saori took this today with her mobile phone camera.

When I had my talk with Kirino in the Starbucks, I borrowed the data from Kirino and printed it out. It was quite a lot of trouble getting the data though...

"Is this something you have to make comment on?"

"..."

It's a photograph of Kirino and her friends during an offline meeting.

One of them is stretching her arm out and holding the mobile phone camera.

The other two, although they seem to be fighting each other, they still somehow look into the camera lens.

"Is this what you call a hobby that only has negative effects?"

The photo almost lets you hear all the noise and chaos; within her frown, you can easily see her true thoughts... It was such a heart-warming photo. At least, that's how I perceived it.

"Although you might not want to admit it, this is what she obtained."

That is...

"Kirino smiling happily in the album with the family... Kirino making a cool pose in the latest trendy clothes for her modeling job... Kirino making a frown and making noise at the offline meeting with her otaku friends... All of these are Kirino! With all the pieces together, she can consider herself complete. With even one of them gone, she will not be herself!"

What I shouted out now, were Kirino's words I heard sometime before.

But I didn't say this in her place.

What I shouted out against my father was my very own words and emotion that came boiling out of my heart.

I held him by the collar and appealed.

"Hey! If you still joke that you won't understand her hobby after seeing this, I'll beat you up in place of Kirino! You don't know anything, so quit talking nonsense like you know shit!"

Father was looking at me solidly, but with a hint of surprise.

Finally, a response came in an emotionless tone.

"I understand your claim."

His veins are showing in his yakuza face making an out of this world expression.

This is nothing other than a true demon. I'm feeling pinned down when I'm the one holding him by the collar . "I take back what I said about it being stupid for now. Sure, I know nothing about it. I admit I was talking with prejudice. Fine. I will allow her hobby for your sake."

"S-Seriously?!"

I let out all of my emotion against Father.

I had no logic or any order in it, it was just shouting with force. It was a horribly done plea.

But even still, since I did it so seriously, I guess something struck him.

He will allow Kirino's hobby... As I was able to hear that from him, I can consider this match of mine as a win.

But Father continued to say this.

"Don't make me repeat my words, but I will limit them to only a portion of them. I can't allow lewd things like the stuff that was in that case. This is not a matter of good or bad. It doesn't have to do with me having no knowledge or having prejudice against that stuff. Consider what only for 18+ means."

Finally, this line came... I let go of Father's collar and went silent with an uneasy expression.

What Father is saying now is completely logical. Since it's restricted to 18+, someone under 18 shouldn't have that stuff.

But if I were to do as he says, then I would have to throw away most of Kirino's collection. Then this would all be meaningless.

However I think of this, Father is still correct. He is, but I can still have my counterclaim to this. Since I did expect that line to come, I did have my preparations to counter it.

"..."

Well I do have it thought up but... Honestly, I didn't want to use it.

There's this strong conflict storming in my mind.

Is it really okay? Do I have to do that much for that damn sister?

But I was weird today, too weird. I was just screwed up.

That's why, my brain gave the signal to go ahead in this direction.

I said aloud.

"K-Kirino has no age restricted stuff..."

Hearing that, Father closes his eyelids and starts shaking, seemingly trying to calm himself down. Suddenly he opens his eyes wide.

"Ack!"

He was holding me by my collar so swiftly that my neck was falling off, then grasped the back of my head, and forced me to look at the DVD case. Ugh... That hurts so bad...

In the case was the stuff we all know. Glittering so vividly was the text saying 'restricted to 18+'.

"Do you still make such a lie in this situation...?"

"I-It's not like that!"

I received something from her, and changed. I turned into an idiot. I changed into an embarrassing person.

That's why I decided to execute such a stupid plan.

"THIS IS MINE!!!"

Okay I admit. This was the worst line I ever spoke in my life.

"So, this is not Kirino's for sure. It's mine that I had Kirino look after! If that's the case, you don't need to throw it away do you?"

You would never be able to see this sight, so open your eyes wide and watch.

The mad demon with veins showing in his face becomes expressionless and comments to me.

"I don't really know much but... This is a game you play with your computer, right? The only computer in this house is... the one Kirino has."

"W-Well I borrowed Kirino's computer and played it."

"O-Oh, really... Y-Y-You were using your little sister's computer, in your little sister's room, playing games where you perform illicit acts on your little sister?!"

"Yeah, it was so fun! You have any objection to that?!"

He punched me in the face. I flew across the room and hit the wall.

How stupid am I?! At least tell him I played it in my room with a laptop I borrowed from her!

"Ugh..."

I feel dizzy. There's blood in my mouth. The headache is horrible. I'm about to faint. Oh I'm finished. I might be dead now...

But not yet! I can't end here!

I raise my face while still on the floor, and appeal to him with tears.

Now listen to my excuse! It's as pure as a saint!

"Anyways, that's mine! High school boys can have porn books that are restricted to over 18, right? Even Mother lets me keep my collection under my bed! That game isn't any different from porn books! How different is it? Eh? Tell me! There isn't, is there! So I'm not going to throw it away! HAHAHA! No matter what anyone tells me, I will defend it at the cost of my life! Listen to me Father! I FUCKING LOVE anime and erotic games! I can say I'm engaged with it! If you throw this away, then I won't be myself anymore! Erotic games are my soul!"

With the last of my power, I shouted out in utter desperation.

"YOU UNDERSTAND?!"

Receiving my soul shout, my father staggered as if he was blacking out.

"You... You...!"

He holds his head as if he was hit with a strong blow to his head.

"Bastard son! Do as you wish! I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT IT!"

It was a huge yell, one like we'd never heard. I've never seen my father so angry as this before ever in my life.

But he doesn't seem to want to kill me. Breathing heavily, Father turns around and stomps away.

Good. I won. Holding my bleeding nose, I make a smile.

So how was it, Kirino? I defended every single piece of your collection.

Haha. This surely turned out so differently from my usual ways.

It was the following morning after the madness in the Kousaka family was solved...

When I went to the usual meeting place, the spectacled childhood friend was already there like usual and waiting for me. And as usual, she would flutter her bag in front of her skirt and call for me with a smile.

"Good morning, Kyou-chan!"

"Yeah good morning, Manami."

A typical morning scene found everywhere.

Oh how soothing.

My days should always be like this.

My name is Kousaka Kyousuke. I'm a 17 year old who goes to the local high school.

I might not be the one to say this but I'm an ordinary high school student.

I'm going to school in no rush with my plain and normal childhood friend.

So you feel envious of us? Normal means to live as do others without doing unnatural things. Safely, means to live with little danger.

All hail mediocrity! Viva, normal life!

But, an abnormal dangerous way of life has its charms too.

Well, these days I can feel that way too.

It's fun, loud, painful and embarrassing.

Going your own way, making challenging tasks and living like you're flying in the skies...

I was able to experience that with my own life.

"K-Kyou-chan... what happened to your face?!"

"Oh, this you mean?"

I thought she was surprised at how plain my face is. Well, I won't deny that, but probably Manami was talking about the large compress placed on my face.

"Well you see, things happened..."

Yeah seriously, many things happened. The events that happened recently made the times the most concentrated I have ever had in my life. I'll probably not forget about this time.

My little sister who's so annoying and hates me like I'm trash, her secret hobby and her life consultation...

I had my talk of tens of years worth with her. I feel I know a little bit about her, something I didn't even feel like knowing.

But you see... That doesn't mean our cold relationship has changed in any way.

I still hate my little sister so much, and don't care at all about her.

She's not changed either. She completely ignored me like I'm some pebble on the street, even this morning.

Well, reality is like this. It doesn't change that easily.

You think it's strange? Since I did work that hard, you think my sister's affection level towards me should rise proportionally, right?

Quit joking around! Don't make me have weird imaginations! This isn't a game after all! Life is not proportional! That's especially true for my life.

Oh yeah, I was getting excited and got off topic. Let me get back to it. Yeah, I did help my sister yesterday. I convinced my father and let him accept her hobby.

But you see, I didn't do that to be thanked by her. I didn't do that wanting something in return. I'm not repeating some famous person's line but...

I just did what I wanted to, the way I wanted to. All selfishly, I just meddled with things.

As a result, what I obtained is something within myself, and not something I get from another.

"I see... A lot of things happened..."

"Yeah. A lot happened."

It's not something I get from another but...

"Good work, Kyou-chan. You did a good job."

This loose statement of appreciation from my childhood friend, who knows nothing about this, was enough to make me feel fulfilled.

“Well, yeah.”

After school that day, when I came home, my sister was calling someone on the phone in the living room.

"I'm back."

I make a greeting just for the formality. But not only does she not respond, she won't even look a bit at me. Kirino in her school uniform was sitting deeply on the sofa, crossing her legs with a super short skirt. She is laughing happily to her mobile phone.

That smile was surely cute, but it won't ever be used against me.

That’s what I was thinking...

"What the heck? Did you watch that DVD properly? I'm talking about the DVD edition!! Why would you derive at such a conclusion?! I don't understand you at

all! That's why women with Jakigan are said to have a messed up sense of perception! Oh, whatever! You need to graduate from your Chuunibyou! Bye!"

What the heck was that conversation...

I'm disgusted as she throws away her mobile violently the moment she finishes her call.

Well, she might have changed in a way than before.

She seems to be doing well without me, huh?

Anyhow, Kirino's problems are solved now.

So finally, my role in the unsuited life consultation is finished!

I talk to myself, and open the refrigerator. I take out a carton of barley tea and pour it into a cup and drink it in one go.

Phew, I let out a deep breath with great satisfaction.

A feeling of assurance and fulfilment, with a hint of loneliness hits my mind.

I shrugged and tried to leave.

"Hey,"

"...Huh?"

The moment I placed my hand on the doorknob, she stopped me, and I looked back. With her usual cold tone, she told me something outrageous.

"I want another life consultation."

...Seriously?

That left me in such despair that tears were coming down my face.

I freeze with my hand on the doorknob.

"And also um..."

Kirino looks up into my eyes and mumbled...

Just one phrase, with a shy smile,

"Thank you, aniki."

She clearly said so.

Then she looks away quickly.

It might have just been my imagination but she may have been blushing.

"..."

I could do nothing but open my mouth and eyes wide in awe.

Because you see... It's just impossible...

I doubted my own eyes and ears while thinking this...

There's no way my sister is this cute.

Afterword

Good afternoon, this is Fushimi Tsukasa. I've successfully presented this new series without any problems. Thank you for getting yourself a copy of this book.

This is an amusing story about a pair of elder brother-younger sister siblings with the worst relationship ever, even though their appearance and personality doesn't seem to convey such. It is also this author's first challenge in writing a long novel of the comedy genre. I gave my all in writing something that would make my readers laugh. I aimed to make it easy to read and enjoy this book, and there is no better joy than if I could successfully do so.

In addition, I've been blessed with the enormous support of my editors-in-charge Miki-san and Kobara-san. To tell the truth, the draft plan of this book - in particular the initial setting/premise of "Imouto" - was done by Miki-san. To put it in another way, it probably wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he is the mastermind behind this book. I have to say that this work isn't the product of this author only, but instead, the result of countless intense meetings among the three

of us. No matter how many times they have read my drafts, and how many times they have given me advice, I cannot be thankful enough towards my two editors-in-charge. I am truly grateful.

I'm sorry for always only complaining. I think I will continue like this, telling you, my editors, frankly about my anxiety and complaints, but somehow or other, please don't abandon me; let's continue to work with each other.

My illustrator, Kanzaki Hiro-san, can draw really cute-looking girls (and especially *nekomimi*). The editor went to "fetch an illustrator who can draw the best *nekomimi* in the world!", and when this was done accordingly and I was shown the cover illustration, the editor got proud of himself for a good job well done in selecting the illustrator. Naturally, I felt entirely the same way too. During the final stage of the editing process, the rough illustrations were a source of energy for us. Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank everyone who helped with the publishing of this book.

Kanzaki Hiro-san and I are currently teaming up once more for another project, and we might be able to provide you with more details about this by the end of this year, so please look forward to it.

June 2008

Fushimi Tsukasa

Translator's Notes

1. ↑ Sangokushi (Records of Three Kingdoms) lance warrior. Comes up in Koihime as well.
2. ↑ goukon is where boys and girls meet up at a restaurant to eat together. It's a type of social meet aimed at setting up boyfriends and girlfriends.
3. ↑ Pickled vegetables, looks red
4. ↑ a shellfish
5. ↑ Dragon Quest reference?
6. ↑ From dragon ball Super Saiya Jin.
7. ↑ Super God water.
8. ↑ God spirit tree juice.
9. ↑ Ninja speak.
10. ↑ Bajeena is a most likely a reference to Quattro Bajeena, one of Char's aliases in Gundam.
11. ↑ Tsukkomi is the straight-man part in Manzai (stand-up comedy), where there's usually straight man and a funny man called the boke.
12. ↑ Black cat.
13. ↑ With programs that air at the same time, they call one of them omote (front) and the other is ura (back) , according to importance.
14. ↑ 'third eye' from 2chVIP stuff. Some random messed up fantasy setting you make up about yourself. (Like you had some third eye on your arm

and have to hide it) its considered apparently embarrassing. Usually refers to a third eye that holds super powers or something.

15. ↑ 8th grade disease - it's said that many people get these strange perceptions of the world with random delusions at around 8th grade. anime/manga with settings you would imagine in 8th grade are called chuunibyou anime.
16. ↑ Parody of Asahi Shimbun, a newspaper.
17. ↑ Basically something like calling her delusional.
18. ↑ This is a way to show apology.
19. ↑ Small sake cup.
20. ↑ Children celebrate coming of age at ages 3, 5, 7 the celebration age depends on gender.